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WAY OF LIFE.

WITH AN

ANALYTICAL INDEX.

BY

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PREFACE.

It is one of the clearest principles of divine revelation, that holiness is the fruit of truth; and it is one of the plainest inferences from that principle, that the exhibition of the truth is the best means of promoting holiness Christians regard the word of God as the only infallible teacher of those truths which relate to the salvation of men. But are the Scriptures really a revelation from God? If they are, what doctrines do they teach? And what influence should those doctrines exert on our heart and life?

The publishing committee of the American Sunday-school Union have long felt the want

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of a book which should give a plain answer to these questions, and be suitable to place in the hands of intelligent and educated young persons, either to arouse their attention, or to guide their steps in the WAY OF LIFE.

The following work has been prepared at the request of the committee, with the hope that it may in some measure answer the purpose just stated. In a Christian country it might seem unnecessary to raise the question whether the Scriptures are the word of God? But those who have had much intercourse with young men, know that even among those who have been religiously educated, there is more or less skepticism upon this point; and where there is no absolute skepticism, there is often an impression that the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible is not so decisive as it might, or even should be. Hence it is that the want of faith is seldom felt to be a great sin. It was therefore deemed important that the question, Why we are bound to believe

the Bible to be the word of God? should be distinctly, though briefly, answered.

The still more comprehensive question, What do the Scriptures teach? is of course here considered only in reference to those great practical doctrines which are essential to evangelical religion, viz.: the doctrines of sin, justification, faith, repentance, and holy living.

With regard to the influence which these doctrines should exert upon the heart and life, or, in other words, with regard to religious experience, reference might be made to the numerous records of the exercises of the people of God, or to what we see daily in his church. As, however, the Scriptures themselves not only teach us what the truth is, but also how it operates upon an enlightened conscience and believing heart, our safest appeal is to them. It is there that we can best learn how we ought to feel and act in view of what the Bible teaches us of sin, of justification, faith,

and repentance; since genuine religious experience is simply the accordance of our views and feelings with the truth of God.

If this little book should be instrumental, by the simple exhibition of the truth, of pointing out the WAY OF LIFE to those who are anxious to know what they must believe and what they must experience in order to be saved, it will answer the design of its preparation and publication.

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THE WAY OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE WORD OF GOD.

SECTION I. *The Internal evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures.*

IT often happens that those who hear the gospel, doubt whether it is really the word of God. Having been taught from infancy to regard it as a divine revelation, and knowing no sufficient reason for rejecting it, they yield a general assent to its claims. There are times, however, when they would gladly be more fully assured that the Bible is not a cunningly devised fable. They think if that point was absolutely certain, they would at once submit to all the gospel requires.

Such doubts do not arise from any deficiency in

the evidence of the divine authority of the Scriptures, nor would they be removed by any increase of that evidence. They have their origin in the state of the heart. The most important of all the evidences of Christianity, can never be properly appreciated unless the heart be right in the sight of God. The same exhibition of truth which produces unwavering conviction in one mind, leaves another in a state of doubt or unbelief. And the same mind often passes rapidly, though rationally, from a state of scepticism to that of faith, without any change in the mere external evidence presented to it.

No amount of mere external evidence can produce genuine faith. The Israelites, who had seen a long succession of wonders in the land of Egypt; who had passed through the divided waters of the Red Sea; who were daily receiving by miracle food from heaven; who had trembled at the manifestations of the divine majesty on Mount Sinai; within sight of that mountain, made a golden calf their God. The men, who saw the miracles of Christ performed almost daily in their presence, cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. Hence our Saviour said, that those who hear not Moses and the prophets would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. We may confidently conclude, therefore, that those who now believe not the gospel, would not

be persuaded had they seen all the miracles which Christ performed.

It is important that the attention of the doubting should be directed to the fact that their want of faith is to be attributed to their own moral state, and not to any deficiency in the evidence of the truth. If our gospel be hid, says the apostle, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.

There is nothing in the doctrine here stated, out of analogy with our daily experience. No truth can be properly apprehended unless there is a harmony between it and the mind to which it is presented. Even abstract or speculative truths are not seen to be true, unless the understanding be duly cultivated to apprehend them. With regard to objects of taste, unless there is a power to perceive the correspondence between them and the standard of beauty, there can be no appreciation of their excellence. And still more obviously in regard to moral and religious truth, there must be a state of mind suited to their apprehension. If our moral sense were entirely destroyed by sin, we could have no perception of moral distinctions; if it is vitiated. what is true in itself and true in the view of the pure in heart, will not be true to us

A man, who has no adequate sense of the evil of sin, cannot believe in the justice of God. If you awaken his conscience, he is convinced at once, without the intervention of any process of proof.

No one can fail to remark that the Bible demands immediate and implicit faith from all who read it. It may lie neglected in the study of the philosopher, or in the chest of the outcast sailor; or it may be given by a missionary yet ignorant of the language of the heathen to whom he ministers. The moment, however, it is opened, in these or any other circumstances, it utters the same calm voice, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. If this demand was confined to the educated, we might suppose it to rest on evidence which the educated only are able to appreciate; or if it was made of those only to whom the scriptures are presented by regularly commissioned ministers, we might suppose it rested on their authority; but it is not thus confined. It is inseparable from the word itself. It is as imperative when the Bible is read by a child to a company of pagans, as when it is proclaimed in a cathedral. But if this demand of faith goes with the word wherever it goes, it must rest upon evidence contained in the word itself. The demand of faith cannot be more extensive, than the exhibi-

tion of evidence. Unless, therefore, we restrict the obligation and the benefits of faith to those who are capable of appreciating the external evidence of the Bible, we must admit that it contains its own evidence.

To make the testimony of others to the truth of Christianity, the ground of faith, is inadmissible for two obvious reasons. In the first place, as already intimated, it is not sufficiently extensive. The obligation to believe rests on multitudes to whom that testimony is not addressed. In the second place, it is entirely inadequate. The great mass of men cannot be required to believe on the testimony of the learned few, a religion which is to control their conduct in this world and to decide their destiny in the next. Besides, learned men testify in behalf of the Koran as well as in favour of the Bible. That, therefore, cannot be an adequate ground of faith, which may be urged in support of error as well as of truth. To require the common people to be able to see why the testimony of learned Christians may safely be relied upon, while that of learned Mussulmans should be rejected, is to require of them a task as severe as the examination of the historical evidences of Christianity. There is, therefore, no way of justifying the universal, immediate and authoritative demand, which the Bible makes on our faith, except

by admitting that it contains within itself the proofs of its divine origin.

It may not be easy, or perhaps possible, to give any adequate exhibition of the nature of this proof to those who profess not to see it. Enough however may be said to show that it is a rational and adequate ground for implicit confidence. Every work bears the impress of its maker. Even among men it is hard for one man successfully to counterfeit the work of another. Is it wonderful then that the works of God should bear the inimitable impress of their author? Do not the heavens declare his glory? Does not the mechanism of an insect as clearly evince the workmanship of God? Why then should it be deemed incredible that his word should contain inherent evidence of its divine origin? If the Bible be the work of God, it must contain the impress of his character, and thereby evince itself to be divine.

It may be objected that we are not competent to judge of this evidence. If it requires so much cultivation of the intellect to judge of the excellence of human productions, and so accurate an acquaintance with the character of their authors, in order to decide on the genuineness of such productions, who can pretend to a knowledge of God which shall enable him to judge what is, or what is not worthy of his hand? This would be a fatal

objection if the internal evidence of the scriptures consisted in their intellectual excellence. It loses its force however when it is remembered that this excellence is, in a great measure, moral, and that goodness carries with it its own evidence. To appreciate evidence of this kind requires no great degree of knowledge or refinement. It requires merely right moral feelings. Where these exist, the evidence that goodness is goodness is immediate and irresistible. It is not because the Bible is written with more than human skill, and that its discrimination of character or its eloquence is beyond the powers of man, that we believe it to be divine. These are matters of which the mass of men are incompetent judges. The evidence in question is suited to the apprehension of the humblest child of God. It is partly negative and partly positive. It consists, in the first place, in the absence of every thing incompatible with a divine origin. There is nothing inconsistent with reason, and there is nothing inconsistent with goodness. Did the scriptures contain any thing contrary to reason or to right moral feeling, belief in its divine origin would be impossible. Such a belief would involve the ascription of folly or sin to its author. There is more in this negative evidence than we are apt to imagine. It can not be urged in behalf of any other book but the Bible, claiming a divine origin.

An impassable gulf is thus placed between the scriptures and all apocryphal writings. The claims of the latter are in every instance disproved by the fact that they contain statements which cannot be true.

It is however the positive internal evidence of a divine origin, which gives power and authority to the claims of the Bible. This evidence consists mainly in its perfect holiness, in the correspondence between all its statements respecting God, man, redemption and a future state, and all our own right judgments, reasonable apprehensions and personal experience. When the mind is enlightened to see this holiness; when it perceives how exactly the rule of duty prescribed in the word of God agrees with that enforced by conscience; how the account which it gives of human nature coincides with human experience; how fully it meets our whole case; when it feels how powerfully the truths there presented operate to purify, console and sustain the soul, the belief of the scriptures is a necessary consequence. The idea that such a book is a lie and a forgery involves a contradiction. The human mind is so constituted that it cannot refuse its assent to evidence, when clearly perceived. We cannot withhold our confidence from a man whose moral excellence is plainly, variously and constantly manifested. We cannot see and

feel his goodness, and yet believe him to be an impostor or deceiver. In like manner, we cannot see the excellence of the scriptures, and yet believe them to be one enormous falsehood. The Bible claims to be the word of God; it speaks in his name, it assumes his authority. How can these claims be false and yet the Bible be so Holy? How can falsehood be an element of perfect excellence? The only possible way of shaking our confidence in the competent testimony of a man, is to show that he is not a good man. If his goodness is admitted, confidence in his word cannot be withheld, and especially when all he says finds its confirmation in our own experience, and commends itself to our conscience and judgment. Thus also it is impossible that we should discern the excellence of the scriptures and feel their correspondence with our experience and necessities, and yet suppose them to be untrue.

When the woman of Samaria reported to her townsmen that Jesus had told her all that ever she did, many of them believed. But after they had themselves listened to his instructions, they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* No Christian can be surprised at this de-

* John iv: 42.

claration, or think the faith in Christ founded upon what he said, either irrational or enthusiastic. We can well believe that there was such an ineffable manifestation of goodness in the Redeemer's countenance, manner and doctrines, as to conciliate entire confidence. Those who were rightly affected could not fail to believe all he said; that he was the Christ, that he came to seek and save them that are lost, to lay down his life for his sheep and to give himself a ransom for many. Can we doubt that the goodness of the Saviour, the elevation, holiness and power of his instructions, their correspondence with our own nature, experience and wants, would of themselves constitute an adequate ground of faith? All this we have. This every man has, who reads the Bible. There the Saviour stands in the majesty of unapproachable excellence. He utters in every hearing ear the words of eternal life; declares his origin, his mission, the design of his advent and death; offers pardon and eternal life to those who come unto God through him. There is the most perfect accordance between his claims and his conduct; between his doctrines and what we know and what we need. To disbelieve him, is to believe him to be a deceiver, and to believe this, is to disbelieve our own perceptions; for we know what goodness is, and we know that goodness cannot deceive, that God cannot lie.

It makes very little difference as to the force of this kind of evidence, whether we personally saw and heard the Saviour for ourselves, or whether we read the exhibition of his character and the record of his instructions. For the evidence lies in his goodness and in the nature of his doctrines. It is the same to us who read the Bible, as it was to those that heard the Saviour. There is therefore the same violence done to reason and duty, in our rejecting it, as was offered by those who believed not because they were not of his sheep, that is, because they were insensible to the constraining influence of the grace and truth which were in Him. Does then any one ask, how we know that the Bible is not a forgery? Let him consider what such an assumption involves. It supposes either that the authors of the Bible were fools, which we can no more believe than that Newton was an idiot; or that they were wicked, which no man can believe who knows what goodness is. Wherever, therefore, the Bible goes, it carries with it evidence, that is irresistible, (when attended to and apppreciated,) that its authors were neither dupes nor deceivers.

It may be asked, If the Bible contains such clear evidence of its divine origin, why are there so many unbelievers? To this it may be answered, that there are two things necessary in order that evidence should produce conviction. The first is that

it should be attended to; otherwise it might as well not exist. Of the many millions of people in Christendom, comparatively few give the Scriptures any serious attention. That such persons should have no effective faith, is no more a matter of surprise than that they should be ignorant of what they never learned. The second requisite for the reception of evidence, is that it should be understood or really apprehended. If this evidence is addressed to the understanding, there must be strength of mind enough to comprehend its nature and bearing; if addressed to the moral faculty, there must be moral sensibility to appreciate it, or it will be like light shining on the eyes of the blind. The internal evidence of the scriptures is in a great measure of this latter kind. It consists in their perfect holiness. In proportion as men are corrupt, they are blind to this kind of evidence. It may exist in all its force, and men be insensible to it. Another part of this evidence consists in the accordance between the scriptures and the religious experience of men. Those who have not the experience, cannot see this accordance. Still another portion of the evidence is made available by the power of God in subduing sin, in purifying the affections, in diffusing peace and joy through the heart. Those who have never felt this power cannot appreciate this kind of proof. The fact, therefore, that so

large a proportion of mankind have no adequate faith in the Scriptures, affords no presumption against the existence of sufficient evidence. This fact is in exact accordance with what the Bible teaches of the moral state of man.

Another objection to the view of the ground of faith given above, is that it leads to enthusiasm, and breaks down the distinction between true and false religion. Every enthusiast, it is said, thinks he sees wonderful excellence in the pretended revelations which he embraces. It is a sufficient answer to this objection to ask, whether the scholar has less faith in the excellence of the great standards of poetry, because the writers of doggerel rhymes have had their admirers? That the sensual, selfish and cruel character of Mohammed appears good in the eyes of a Turk, does not prove him to be an enthusiast who bows with reverence before the supreme excellence of Jesus Christ. That the pagan world saw evidence of the existence of their gods in the heavens and in the course of nature, does not make him an enthusiast, who recognizes in the works of God the manifestations of infinite power, wisdom and goodness. It is most unreasonable to assume that we must not feel the force of truth and excellence, because others have ascribed these attributes to error and vice. It is not according to the constitution of our nature that one man should cease to

know a thing to be true or good, because others do not see it. The evidence is complete for him, though all the world reject it.

If it is asked, where the standard is; what criterion of excellence exists by which I am authorized to decide that what I call goodness is really such; the rule is given in the nature of man. We know that benevolence is better than malice, veracity than deceit, humility than pride, and by the same rule we know that Christianity is better than Hindooism, and the blessed Redeemer than the Arabian impostor. No judgment can be more sure than this, no persuasion more intimate, no confidence either more firm or more rational. It is, therefore, no objection against admitting the excellence of the Scriptures to be a proof of their divine origin, that besotted or deluded men have ascribed excellence to folly and wickedness.

SECTION II. *The internal evidence of their divine origin is the proper ground of faith in the Scriptures.*

The Scriptures themselves clearly teach that the faith which they demand is founded upon the authority of God, manifesting itself in them by the excellence and power of the truth which they contain. They everywhere represent faith as the effect and evidence of right moral feeling, and un-

belief as the result of moral or spiritual blindness. Our Saviour said to the Jews, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* Again, He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.† On another occasion he said, Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep; my sheep hear my voice.‡ The apostle speaks to the same effect, Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.§ In like manner Paul says, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.‖ And again, If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. But God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory

* John vii. 17. † John viii. 47. ‡ John x. 26, 27.
§ 1 John iv. 2, 3. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* The doctrine taught in these and similar passages, is that there is in the word of God and especially in the person and character of Jesus Christ, a clear and wonderful manifestation of the divine glory. To this manifestation the natural man is blind, and therefore does not believe, but those who have the Spirit of God discern this glory and therefore believe.

It is in accordance with this view that unbelief is represented as so grave a moral offence, and faith as so important a duty. Atheism is every where regarded as a crime, because the evidences of the existence of God are everywhere present, above us, around us and within us. They are addressed to the moral constitution, as well as to the speculative understanding. They cannot be resisted without the same violence to moral obligations, or the authority of moral considerations, that is involved in calling virtue vice, and vice virtue. Hence the Scriptures always speak of unbelief as a sin against God, and the special ground of the condemnation of the world. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.† Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He

* 2 Cor. iv. 3—? † John iii. 18.

is anti-Christ, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* Disbelief of the Son as revealed in the Scriptures, is an offence of the same nature as the denial of God. In both cases supreme excellence is revealed and disregarded. Much to the same effect the Saviour says, He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.† On the other hand, faith is represented as the highest act of obedience, as a moral act of the greatest worth in the sight of God. Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.‡ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name.§ And our Saviour told the enquiring Jews, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.‖ These representations cannot be reconciled with the assumption that faith is founded on external testimony, which does not address itself to our moral nature, and an assent to which has so little concern with moral character. All is plain, however, if we are required to believe in the Son because his glory as of the only begotten of the Father is presented to us; and to receive the Scriptures because they bear the impress of the divine perfections. If this be

* 1 John ii. 22, 23. † John xv. 23. ‡ 1 John v. 1.
§ John i. 12. ‖ John vi. 29.

the ground of faith, unbelief is indeed a crime. It is a refusal to recognise wisdom and holiness, and to acknowledge the manifested excellence of God.

This view of the ground of faith is confirmed by the effects ascribed to that grace. It works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world, it produces peace and joy. It is indeed conceivable that the conviction of truths affecting our interests, however produced, should call forth fear, sorrow or joy according to their nature. But it is not conceivable that belief of moral or religious truths, founded upon the testimony of others, should control our affections. A man may believe on authority, or on merely rational grounds, that we are under a moral government, and that the law by which we are bound is holy, just and good, but such a faith will not subdue his opposition. He may be, by argument or miracle, convinced of the existence of God, but such a faith will not produce love. Faith therefore cannot have the effects ascribed to it, unless it is founded on a spiritual apprehension of the truths believed.

Hence it is that faith is represented as the gift of God. The evidence indeed is presented to all, or there would be no obligation to believe; but men are morally blind, and therefore the eyes of their understanding must be opened that they may understand the things which are freely given to them

of God. The apostle therefore says to his believing brethren, Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* It is here taught, as in other passages already quoted, that believers are the recipients of an influence, an unction, from the Holy One, which convinces them of the truth, and makes them see and know that it is truth. Hence Paul says, his preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that the faith of his hearers might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; that is, that their faith might not be the effect of skilful reasoning, but of the spiritual perception and experience of the truth.

All this is confirmed by the constant practice of the inspired teachers. Though they appealed to all kinds of evidence in support of the doctrines which they taught, to signs and wonders, and

* 1 John ii. 20, 21, 27.

divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, ye they by no means rested the obligation to believe either exclusively or mainly upon these external signs. In many cases faith was demanded by those inspired men who never wrought miracles of any kind, as was the fact in the case of some of the prophets; and still more frequently it was required of those among whom no such wonders had been performed. When the Jews demanded a sign and the Greeks wisdom, the apostles preached Christ, and him crucified, as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. Their constant endeavour was by the manifestation of the truth to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And if their gospel was hid, it was hid to them that are lost.

It is, therefore, plainly the doctrine of the scriptures themselves, that the word of God is to be believed because of the authority or command of God manifesting itself therein, in a manner analogous to the exhibition of his perfections in the works of nature. If, as Paul teaches us, the eternal power and godhead are so clearly manifested by the things that are made, that even the heathen are without excuse; and if their unbelief is ascribed not to the want of evidence, but to their not liking to retain God in their knowledge; we need not wonder that the far clearer manifestation of the

divine perfections made in the scripture, should be the ground of a more imperative command to believe.

It is the experience of true Christians in all ages and nations that their faith is founded on the spiritual apprehension and experience of the power of the truth. There are multitudes of such Christians, who, if asked why they believe the scriptures to be the word of God, might find it difficult to give an answer, whose faith is nevertheless both strong and rational. They are conscious of its grounds though they may not be able to state them. They have the witness in themselves, and know that they believe, not because others believe, or because learned men have proved certain facts which establish the truth of Christianity. They believe in Christ for the same reason that they believe in God; and they believe in God because they see his glory and feel his authority and power.

If then the truth of God contains in its own nature a revelation of divine excellence, the sin of unbelief is a very great sin. Not to have faith in God, when clearly revealed, is the highest offence which a creature can commit against its creator To refuse credence to the testimony of God, when conveyed in the manner best adapted to our nature, is to renounce our allegiance to our creator. To disregard the evidence of truth and excellence in Jesus

Christ, is the highest indignity that we can show to truth and excellence. This sin is common, and therefore is commonly disregarded. Men do not easily see the turpitude of evils with which they are themselves chargeable. The faults of those who go beyond them in iniquity they are quick to discern. And therefore the man who feels no compunction at want of faith in the Son of God, will abhor him who pronounces the Redeemer a wicked impostor. He will wait for no explanation and will listen to no excuse. The mere fact that a man, acquainted with the Scriptures, is capable of such a judgment respecting the Son of God, is proof of depravity which nothing can gainsay. Yet how little difference is there between the state of mind which would admit of such a judgment, and the state in which those are who have no faith in the declarations of Christ; who disregard his promises and warnings; who do not feel them to be true, and therefore treat them as fables. The want of faith therefore of which men think so lightly, will be found the most unreasonable and perhaps the most aggravated of all their sins. It implies an insensibility to the highest kind of evidence, and involves the rejection of the greatest gift which God has ever offered to man, pardon, holiness, and eternal life.

SECTION III. *External evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures. The Testimony of the Church.*

As God has left the heathen to the unauthenticated revelation of himself in his works, and holds them responsible for their unbelief, so he might have left us to the simple revelation of himself in his word. He has been pleased, however, to confirm that word by external proofs of the most convincing character, so that we are entirely without excuse.

The testimony of the church is of itself an unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity. The validity of this testimony does not depend upon the assumed infallibility of any class of men. It is merely the testimony of an innumerable body of witnesses, under circumstances which preclude the idea of delusion nor deception. For the sake of illustration take any particular branch of Christ's church, as for example the Lutheran. It now exists in Europe and America. It every where possesses the same version of the Scriptures, and the same confession of faith. Its testimony is, that it owes its existence as an organized body, to Luther; to whom it ascribes the translation of the Bible, and under whose auspices it professes to have received the Augsburg Confession. It is clearly impossible that these documents could, during the present

century, have been palmed upon these scattered millions of men. They all bear testimony that they received them as they now are from the hands of their fathers. As to this point, neither delusion nor deception is conceivable. In the eighteenth century we find this church scarcely less numerous than it is at present. It bore the same testimony then, that it does now. With one voice it declared that their fathers possessed before them the standards of their faith. This testimony is repeated again in the seventeenth, and again in the sixteenth century, till we come to the age of Luther. This testimony, conclusive in itself, is confirmed by all kinds of collateral evidence. Every thing in the style, doctrines and historical references of the standards of the Lutheran church, agrees with the age to which they are referred. The influence of a society holding those doctrines is traceable through the whole of the intervening period. The wars, the treaties, the literary and religious institutions of the period, to a greater or less degree, received their character from that Society. Much therefore as men may differ as to Luther's character, as to the wisdom of his conduct or the truth of his doctrines, no sane man has ever questioned the fact that he lived, that he translated the Scriptures, that he organized a new church, and gave his followers the Augsburg confession.

The same series of remarks might be made in reference to the church of England. That extended and powerful body has her thirty-nine articles, her liturgy, and her homilies, which she testifies she received from the Reformers. This testimony cannot be doubted. At no period of her history could that church either deceive or have been deceived, as to that point. Her testimony moreover is confirmed by all collateral circumstances. The liturgy, articles and homilies are in every respect consistent with their reputed origin; and the whole history of England during that period is interwoven with the history of that church. The consequence is, no man doubts that the English reformers lived, or that they framed the standards of doctrine and worship universally ascribed to them.

This argument when applied to the whole Christian church is no less conclusive. This church now exists in every quarter of the globe, and embraces many millions of disciples. Every where it has the same records of its faith; it is every where an organized society with religious officers and ordinances. It every where testifies that these records and institutions were received from Christ and his apostles. That this vast society did not begin to exist during the present century, is as evident as that the world was not just made. It is no less plain that it did not begin to exist in the

eighteenth, the seventeenth, the sixteenth, nor in any other century subsequent to the first in our era. In each succeeding century, we find millions of men, thousands of churches and ministers uniting their testimony to the fact that they received their sacred writings and institutions from their predecessors, until we come to the age of Christ himself. Did the origin of the church run back beyond the limits of authentic history, so as to leave a gap between its reputed founder and its ascertained existence, this argument would fail; an essential link would be wanting, and the whole extended chain would fall to the ground. But as this is not the case, its testimony touching the historical facts of its origin, is irresistible as that of the church of England respecting the origin of its articles and liturgy. The Christian church is traced up to the time of Christ by a mass of evidence which cannot be resisted; so that to deny that Christ lived, and that the church received from his followers the sacred writings, is not merely to reject the testimony of thousands of competent witnesses, but to deny facts which are essential to account for the subsequent history and the existing state of the world. A man might as well profess to believe in the foliage of a tree, but not in its branches and stem.

This testimony of the church as to the facts on which Christianity is founded, is confirmed by al-

kinds of collateral evidence. The language in which the New Testament is written is precisely that which belonged to the time and place of its origin. It is the language of Jews speaking Greek and in its peculiarities belonged to no other age or people. All the historical allusions are consistent with the known state of the world at that time. The history of the world since the advent of Christ pre-supposes the facts recorded in the New Testament. It is beyond a doubt that the religion taught by a few poor men in Judea, has changed the state of a large part of the world. Paganism has disappeared, a new religion been introduced; laws, customs, institutions and manners become prevalent, and they all rest upon the facts to which the church bears her testimony.

Beyond all this, the internal character of the scriptures is worthy of the origin ascribed to them; a character which gives the only adequate solution of the revolution which they have effected. When God said, Let there be light, there was light. And when Jesus Christ said, I am the light of the world, the light shone. We cannot doubt that it is light; neither can we doubt when it arose, for all before was darkness.

This testimony of the church, thus confirmed by all internal and external proofs, establishes the fact that Christ lived and died, that he founded the

Christian church, and that the New Testament was received from his immediate followers. But these facts involve the truth of the gospel as a revelation from God, unless we suppose that Christ and his apostles were deceivers. The evidence against this latter assumption is as strong as the evidence of the existence of the sun. The blind, if they please, may deny that the sun exists, and none but the morally blind can resist the evidence which the New Testament affords of the moral excellence and intellectual sobriety of the sacred writers. If they were trustworthy men, men who we are to believe spoke the truth, then they actually possessed and exercised the miraculous powers to which they laid claim. To these powers Christ and his apostles appealed as an unanswerable proof of their divine mission; and we cannot reject their testimony without denying their integrity.

Section IV. *The argument from Prophecy.*

The same course of argument which proves that the version of the scriptures and the Augsburg confession in the possession of the Lutheran church; that the articles, liturgy and homilies in the possession of the church of England; that the New Testament in the possession of the whole Christian world, were derived from the sources to which

they are severally referred, proves with equal force that the writings of the Old Testament in the possession of the Jews are the productions of the ancient prophets. Jews and Christians now have them. They had them a century ago; they had them in the time of Christ. They were then universally acknowledged by the Israelites in Judea and elsewhere. They can be historically traced up centuries before the advent of Christ. Three hundred years before that event, they were translated into the Greek language and widely disseminated. They contain the history, laws, and literature of the people of Judea, whose existence and peculiarities are as well ascertained as those of any people in the world. These writings are essential to account for the known character of that people, for it was in virtue of these sacred books that they were what they were. Critics have indeed disputed about the particular dates of some of these productions, but no one has had the hardihood to deny that they existed centuries before the birth of Christ. This being admitted, we have a basis for another argument for the truth of Christianity, which can not be resisted.

In these ancient writings, preserved in the hands of the open enemies of Christ, we find the advent of a deliverer clearly predicted. Immediately after the apostasy, it was foretold that the seed of the

woman should bruise the serpent's head. This prediction is the germ of all the subsequent prophecies, which do but reveal its manifold meaning. Who the promised seed was to be, and how the power of evil was by him to be destroyed, later predictions gradually revealed. It was first made known that the Redeemer should belong to the race of Shem.* Then that he should be of the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was made; In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;† then that he should be of the tribe of Judah of whom it was foretold that, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, or a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and to him shall be the gathering of the people.‡ Subsequently it was revealed that he was to be of the lineage of David; There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.§

It was foretold that his advent should be preceded by that of a special messenger. Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall sud-

* Gen. ix. 26. † Gen. xviii. 18.
‡ Gen. xlix. 10. § Is. xi. 1, 2.

denly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in, behold he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts.* The time, the manner, and the place of his birth were all predicted. As to the time, Daniel said, Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to build and restore Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks.† As to the miraculous manner of his birth, Isaiah said, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.‡ As to the place, Micah said, But thou Bethlehem Ephratah though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.§

This deliverer was to be a poor man. Behold, O daughter of Zion, thy king cometh unto thee, poor, riding upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass.‖ He was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men,¶ and yet Immanuel, God with us,** Jehovah our righteousness,†† Wonderful, Coursellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,‡‡

* Mal. iii. 1. † Daniel ix. 25. ‡ Isaiah vii. 14.
§ Micah v. 2. ‖ Zech. ix. 9. ¶ Is. 53.
** Is. vii. 14. †† Jer. xxiii. 6. ‡‡ Is. ix. 6.

whose goings forth were of old, from the days of eternity.*

The Redeemer thus predicted was to appear in the character of a prophet or divine teacher. The Lord thy God, said Moses, will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken.† Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles.‡ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.§ In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness; the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.‖

He was also to be a priest. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.¶ He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear

* Mich. v. 2. † Deut. xviii. 15. ‡ Is. xlii. 1.
§ Is. lxi. 1 ‖ Is xxix. 18, 19. ¶ Ps. cx. 4.

the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne.*

The regal character of this Redeemer is set forth in almost every page of the prophetic writings. I have anointed, (said God in reference to the Messiah,) my king on my holy hill of Zion.† Thy throne O God is forever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.‡ Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever.§

The characteristics of this kingdom of the Messiah were also clearly predicted. They were to be a spiritual, in distinction from the external and ceremonial character of the former dispensation Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, &c.

* Zech. vi. 13. † Ps. ii. 6.
‡ Ps. xlv. 6, 7. § Is. ix. 6, 7.

will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.* Hence the effusion of the Holy Spirit is so constantly mentioned as attending the advent of the promised Redeemer. In that day I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, &c.†

Again, this kingdom was not to be confined to the Jews, but was to include all the world. As early as in the book of Genesis it was declared that the obedience of all nations should be yielded to Shiloh, and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in Abraham and his seed. God promised the Messiah the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.‡ It shall come to pass in the last days, said Isaiah, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.§ It is a light thing, said God, that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.‖ In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which

* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. † Joel ii. 28. ‡ Ps. ii. 8.
§ Is. ii. 2. ‖ Is. xlix. 6.

shall stand for an ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek.* I saw in the night visions, said Daniel, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given to him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.† Its progress however was to be gradual. The stone cut out of the mountains, without hands, was to break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, i. e. all other kingdoms, and become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.‡

Though the prophets describe in such strong language the excellence, glory and triumph of this Redeemer, they did not the less distinctly predict his rejection, sufferings and death. Lord who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he is despised and rejected of men we hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised and we esteemed him not.§ To him whom

* Is. xi. 10.
† Dan. vii. 13, 14.
‡ Dan. ii. 45.
§ Is. liii.

man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, and princes also shall worship.* The people whom he came to redeem, it was foretold, would not only reject him, but betray and sell him for thirty pieces of silver. If ye think good, give my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price at which I was prized at of them.† He was to be grievously persecuted and put to death. He was, said the prophet, taken from prison and from judgment (cut off by an oppressive judgment) and who shall declare his generation; for he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death.‡ Even the manner and circumstances of his death were minutely foretold. The assembly of the wicked enclose me; they pierce my hands and my feet. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.§ He was not however to continue under the power of death. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.‖

* Is. xlix. 7. † Zech xi. 12. ‡ Is. liii. 8, 9.
§ Ps. xxii. 16, 18. ‖ Ps. xvi. 10, 11.

The consequences of the rejection of the Messiah to the Jewish people were also predicted with great distinctness. The children of Israel, it is said, shall abide many days without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without teraphim. Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.* Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.† Of the rebellious portion of the nation it was said, I will scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth to the other, and among those nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the soul of thy foot have rest; . . . And thou shalt become an astonishment and proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead thee.‡ Though thus scattered and afflicted, they were not to be utterly destroyed, for God promised saying, When they are in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenan with them, for I am the Lord their God.§ It was moreover predicted that after a long dispersion they should be brought to acknowledge their crucified

* Hos. iii. 4, 5. † Is. x. 22, 23.
‡ Deut. xxviii. 66. § Lev. xxvi. 44.

king. I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his first-born.* This same prophet foretold that after the people had rejected and betrayed the good shepherd, they should be given up to the oppression of their enemies, the greater portion should be destroyed, but the residue, after long suffering should be restored.†

This representation of the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures, respecting Christ and his kingdom, is in the highest degree inadequate. It would be impossible to give a full exhibition of the subject, without unfolding the whole Old Testament economy. It is not in detached predictions merely, that the former dispensation was prophetic. In its main design it was prefigurative and preparatory. It had indeed its immediate purpose to answer, in preserving the Israelites a distinct people, in sustaining the true religion, and in exhibiting the divine perfections in his government of the church. But all this was subordinate to its grand purpose of preparing that people and the world for the advent

* Zech. xii. 10. † Zech. xiii. 7, 9

of Christ, and to be a shadowy representation of the glories of the new dispensation, for the double purpose of affording an object of faith and hope to those then living, and that the new economy might be better understood, more firmly believed and more extensively embraced. Detached passages from such a scheme of history and prophecy are like the scattered ruins of an ancient temple. To form a just judgment the plan must be viewed as a whole as well as in its details. It could then be seen that the history of the Jews was the history of the lineage of Christ; the whole sacrificial ritual a prefiguration of the Lamb of God who was to bear the sin of the world; that the tabernacle and the temple, with their complicated services, were types of things spiritual and heavenly; that the prophets, who were the teachers and correctors of the people, were sent, not merely nor principally to foretell temporal deliverances, but mainly to keep the eyes of the people directed upward and onward to the great deliverer and to the final redemption. Detached passages can give no adequate conception of this stupendous scheme of preparation and prophecy, running through thousands of years, and its thousand lines all tending to one common centre,—the CROSS OF CHRIST.

The argument from prophecy in support of the truth of Christianity, therefore, can be appreciated

by those only who will candidly study the whole system. Still enough has been presented to show that it is impossible to account for the correspondence between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the events recorded in the New, upon any other assumption than that of divine inspiration. We have seen that it was predicted, centuries before the advent of Christ, that a great deliverer should arise, to be born of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, and at the village of Bethlehem; that he should be a poor and humble man and yet worthy of the highest reverence paid to God; that he should be a teacher, priest and king; that he should be rejected by his own people, persecuted and put to death; that he should rise again from the dead; that the Spirit of God should be poured out upon his followers, giving them holiness, wisdom and courage; that true religion, no longer confined to the Jews, should be extended to the Gentiles and in despite of all opposition should continue, triumph and ultimately cover the earth; that the Jews who rejected the Messiah, should be cast off and scattered and yet preserved; like a river in the ocean, divided but not dissipated, a standing miracle, a fact without a parallel or analogy. Here then is the whole history of Christ and his kingdom, written centuries before his advent. A history full of apparent inconsistencies; a history

not written in one age or by one man, but in different ages and by different men, each adding some new fact or characteristic, yet all combining to form one consistent, though apparently contradictory whole.

Admitting then, what no one denies, the antiquity of the Jewish Scriptures, there is no escape from the conclusion that they were written by divine inspiration, and that Jesus Christ to whom they so plainly refer, is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. To suppose that Christ, knowing these ancient prophecies, set himself, without divine commission, to act in accordance with them, is to suppose impossibilities. It is to suppose that Jesus Christ was a bad man, which no one, who reads the New Testament, can believe, any more than he can believe that the sun is the blackness of darkness. It is to suppose him to have had a control over the actions of others which no impostor could exert. Many of the most important predictions in reference to Christ were fulfilled by the acts of his enemies. Did Christ instigate the treachery of Judas, or prompt the priests to pay the traitor thirty pieces of silver? Did he plot with Pilate for his own condemnation? or so arrange that he should die by a Roman, instead of a Jewish, mode of capital infliction? Did he induce the soldiers to part his garments and cast

lots upon his vesture, or stipulate with them that none of his bones should be broken? By what possible contrivance could the two great predicted events of the final destruction of the Jewish policy and the consequent dispersion of the Jews, on the one hand, and the rapid propagation of the new religion among the Gentiles, on the other, have been brought to pass? These events were predicted, their occurrence was beyond the scope of contrivance or imposture. There is no rational answer to this argument from prophecy. The testimony of the Scriptures to the messiahship of Jesus Christ, is the testimony of God. Search the Scriptures, said our Saviour himself, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

God then has been pleased to hedge up the way to infidelity. Men must do violence to all their usual modes of argument; they must believe moral impossibilities and irreconcilable contradictions, and above all they must harden their hearts to the excellence of the Saviour, before they can become infidels.

This exposition of the grounds of faith is made in order to show that unbelief is a sin, and to justify the awful declaration of Christ, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." Men flatter themselves that they are not responsible for their faith.

Belief being involuntary, cannot, it is said, be a matter of praise or blame. This false opinion arises from confounding things very different in their nature. Faith differs according to its object and the nature of the evidence on which it is founded A man believes that two and two are four, or that Napoleon died in St. Helena, and is neither morally better, nor worse for such a faith. Disbelief, in such cases, would indicate insanity, not moral aberration. But no man can believe that virtue is vice or vice virtue, without being to the last degree depraved. No man can disbelieve in God, especially under the light of revelation, without thereby showing that he is destitute of all right moral and religious sentiments. And no man can disbelieve the record which God has given of his Son, without being blind to the glory of God and the moral excellence of the Saviour. He rejects the appropriate testimony of God, conveyed in a manner which proves it to be his testimony.

It is vain, therefore, for any man to hope that he can be innocently destitute of faith in God or of faith in Jesus Christ. If the external world retains such an impression of the hand of God, as to leave those without excuse, who refuse to regard it as his work; surely those who refuse to acknowledge the excellence of his word and the glory of his Son, will not be held guiltless. The evidence which

has convinced millions, is before their eyes, and should convince them. Instead, therefore, of apologizing for their want of faith and complaining of the weakness of the evidence, to which nothing but neglect or blindness can render them insensible, let them confess their guilt in not believing, and humble themselves before God and pray that he would open their eyes to see the excellence of his word. They should dismiss their cavils, and be assured that if the Bible does not win their faith by its milder glories, it will one day, reveal itself by its terrors, to their awakened consciences, to be indeed the word of God.

CHAPTER II.

SIN.

SECTION I. *All men are sinners. The nature of man, since the fall, is depraved.*

SINCE then the Scriptures are undoubtedly the word of God, with what reverence should we receive their divine instructions; with what assiduity and humility should we study them; with what confidence should we rely upon the truth of all their declarations; and with what readiness should we obey all their directions! We are specially concerned to learn what they teach with regard to the character of men, the way of salvation, and the rule of duty.

With respect to the first of these points, (the character of men) the Bible very clearly teaches that all men are sinners. The apostle Paul not only asserts this truth, but proves it at length, in reference both to those who live under the light of nature, and those who enjoy the light of revelation. The former, he says, are justly chargeable with

impiety and immorality, because the perfections of the divine Being, his eternal power and godhead, have, from the creation, been manifested by the things which are made. Yet men have not acknowledged their creator. They neither worshipped him as God, nor were thankful for his mercies, but served the creature more than the creator. In thus departing from the fountain of all excellence, they departed from excellence itself. Their foolish hearts were darkened and their corruption manifests itself not only by degrading idolatry, but by the various forms of moral evil both in heart and life. These sins are committed against the law which is written on every man's heart; so that they know that those who do such things are worthy of death, and are therefore without excuse even in their own consciousness.

With regard to those who enjoy a supernatural revelation of the character and requirements of God, the case is still more plain. Instead of rendering to this God the inward and outward homage which are his due, they neglect his service, and really prefer his creatures to himself. Instead of regulating their conduct by the perfect rule of duty contained in the Scriptures, they constantly dishonour God, by breaking that law. It is thus the apostle shows that all classes of men, when judged by the light they have severally enjoyed, are found

guilty before God. This universality of guilt moreover, he says, is confirmed by the clear testimony of the Scriptures, which declare, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

This language is not used by the Holy Spirit in reference to the men of any one age or country, but in reference to the human race. It is intended to describe the moral character of man. It is in this sense that it is quoted and applied by the apostle. And we accordingly find similar declarations in all parts of the Bible, in the New Testament, as well as in the Old, in the writings of one age, as well as in those of another. And there are no passages of an opposite character; there are none which represent the race as being what God requires, nor any which speak of any member of that race as being free from sin. On the contrary, it is expressly said, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* In many things we all offend.† There is no man that sinneth not.‡ All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.§ Hence the Scriptures pro-

* 1 John i. 8. † James iii. 2. ‡ 1 Kings viii. 46. § Rom. iii. 23.

ceed upon the assumption of the universal sinfulness of men. To speak, to act, to walk after the manner of men, is, in the language of the Bible, to speak or act wickedly. The world are the wicked. This present evil world, is the description of mankind, from whose character and deserved punishment, it is said to be the design of Christ's death to redeem his people.* The world cannot hate you, said our Saviour to those who refused to be his disciples, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.† They are of the world, therefore they speak of the world and the world heareth them.‡ We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.§

This however is not a doctrine taught in isolated passages. It is one of those fundamental truths which are taken for granted in almost every page of the Bible. The whole scheme of redemption supposes that man is a fallen being. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He was announced as the Saviour of sinners. His advent and work have no meaning or value but upon the assumption that we are guilty, for he came to save his people from their sins; to die the just for the unjust; to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Those ho have no sin, need no Saviour; those who do

* Gal. i. 4. † John vii. 7. ‡ 1 John iv. 5.
§ 1 John v. 19.

not deserve death, need no Redeemer. As the doctrine of redemption pervades the Scripture, so does the doctrine of the universal sinfulness of men.

This doctrine is also assumed in all the Scriptural representations of what is necessary for admission into heaven. All men, everywhere, are commanded to repent. But repentance supposes sin. Every man must be born again, in order to see the kingdom of God; he must become a new creature; he must be renewed after the image of God. Being dead in trespasses and in sins, he must be quickened, or made partaker of a spiritual life. In short it is the uniform doctrine of the Bible, that all men need both pardon and sanctification in order to their admission to heaven. It therefore teaches that all men are sinners.

The Scriptures moreover teach that the sinfulness of men is deep seated; or, consisting in a corruption of the heart, it manifests itself in innumerable forms in the actions of the life. All the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually.* God says of the human heart that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.† All men, by nature are the children of wrath.‡ And therefore

* Gen vi. 5. † Jer. xvii. 9. ‡ Eph. ii. 3.

the Psalmist says, Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

This corruption of our nature is the ground of the constant reference of every thing good in man to the Holy Spirit, and of everything evil, to his own nature. Hence in the language of the Bible, the natural man is a corrupt man; and the spiritual man alone is good. Hence too the constant opposition of the terms flesh and spirit; the former meaning our nature as it is apart from divine influence, and the latter the Holy Spirit, or its immediate effects. To be in the flesh, to walk after the flesh, to mind the things of the flesh, are all Scriptural expressions descriptive of the natural state of men. It is in this sense of the term that Paul says, In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing;† and that our Saviour said, That which is born of the flesh is flesh.‡

This humbling doctrine is, moreover, involved in all the descriptions which the Bible gives of the nature of that moral change which is necessary to salvation. It is no mere outward reformation; it is no assiduous performance of external duties. It is a regeneration; a being born of the Spirit; a new creation; a passing from death unto life. A

* Ps. li. 5. † Rom. vii. 18. ‡ John iii. 6.

change never effected by the subject of it, but which has its source in God. Of no doctrine, therefore, is the Bible more full than of that which teaches that men are depraved and fallen beings, who have lost the image of God, and who must be created anew in Christ Jesus before they can see the kingdom of heaven.

These Scriptural representations respecting the universality of sin and the corruption of our nature, are abundantly confirmed by experience and observation. Men may differ as to the extent of their sinfulness, or as to the ill desert of their transgressions, but they cannot be insensible to the fact that they are sinners, or that they have sustained this character as long as they have had any self-knowledge. As far back as they can go in the history of their being, they find the testimony of conscience against them. As this consciousness of sin is universal, and as it exists as soon as we have any knowledge of ourselves, it proves that we are fallen beings; that we have lost the moral image of God with which our first parents were created. It is a fact, of which every human being is a witness, that our moral nature is such that instead of seeking our happiness in God and holiness, we prefer the creature to the creator. It would be just as unreasonable to assert that this was the original, proper state of man, as to say our reason

was sound, if it universally, immediately and infallibly led us into wrong judgments upon subjects fairly within its competency.

The proof, that man is a depraved being, is as strong as that he is a rational, a social, or a moral being. He gives no signs of reason at his birth; but he invariably manifests his intellectual nature as soon as he becomes capable of appreciating the objects around him or of expressing the operations of his mind. No one supposes reason to be the result of education, or the effect of circumstances, merely because its operations cannot be detected from the first moment of existence. The uniformity of its manifestation under all circumstances, is regarded as sufficient proof that it is an attribute of our nature.

The same remark may be made respecting the social affections. No one of them is manifested from the beginning of our course in this world; yet the fact that men in all ages and under all circumstances, evince a disposition to live in society; that all parents love their children, that all people have more or less sympathy in the joys and sorrows of their fellow men, is proof that these affections are not acquired but original, that they belong to our nature and are characteristic of it.

In like manner the apostle reasons from the fact that all men perform moral acts and experience the

approbation or disapprobation of conscience, that they have, by nature, and not from example, instruction, or any other external influence, but in virtue of their original moral constitution, a law written on their hearts, a sense of right and wrong. But if the uniform occurrence of any moral acts is a proof of a moral nature, the uniform occurrence of wrong moral acts is a proof of a corrupt moral nature. If the universal manifestation of reason and of the social affections, proves man to be by nature a rational and social being, the universal manifestation of sinful affections proves him to be by nature a sinful being. When we say that any one is a bad man, we mean that the predominant character of his actions proves him to have bad principles or dispositions. And when we say that man's nature is depraved we mean that it is a nature whose moral acts are wrong. And this uniformity of wrong moral action is as much a proof of a depraved nature, as the acts of a bad man are a proof of the predominance of evil dispositions in his heart. This is the uniform judgment of men, and is sanctioned by the word of God A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Therefore by their fruits shall ye know them. This illustration was used by our Saviour with the express design of teaching that the predominant character of the acts

of men, is to be taken as a certain index of the state of the heart; and hence the uniform occurrence of sin in all men is a certain evidence of the corruption of their nature. Indeed there is no one fact with regard to human nature, which consciousness and observation more fully establish than that it is depraved.

SECTION II. *The sins of men are numerous and aggravated.*

The Bible not only teaches that all men are sinners, and that the evil is deeply seated in their hearts, but moreover that their sinfulness is very great. The clearest intimation which a lawgiver can give of his estimate of the evil of transgression is the penalty which he attaches to the violation of his laws. If he is wise and good, the penalty will be a true index of the real demerit of transgression; and in the case of God, who is infinitely wise and good, the punishment which he denounces against sin, must be an exact criterion of its ill-desert. If we are unable to see that sin really deserves what God has declared to be its proper punishment, it only shows that our judgment differs from his; and that it should thus differ is no matter of surprise. We cannot know all the reasons which indicate the righteousness of the

divine threatenings We can have no adequate conception of the greatness, goodness and wisdom of the Being against whom we sin; nor of the evil which sin is suited to produce; nor of the perfect excellence of the law which we transgress. That sin therefore appears to us a less evil than God declares it to be, is no evidence that it is really undeserving of his wrath and curse.

There is a still more operative cause of our low estimate of the evil of sin. The more depraved a man is, the less capable is he of estimating the heinousness of his transgressions. And the man who in one part of his career, looked upon certain crimes with abhorrence, comes at last to regard them with indifference. That we are sinners therefore, is a sufficient explanation of the fact, that we look upon sin in a very different light from that in which it is presented in the word of God. Nothing then can be more reasonable than that we should bow before the judgment of God, and acknowledge that sin really deserves the punishment which he has declared to be its due. That punishment is so awful, that nothing but a profound reverence for God, and some adequate conception of the evil of sin, can produce a sincere acquiescence in its justice. Yet nothing can be more certain than that this punishment is the proper measure of the ill-desert of sin.

The term commonly employed to designate this punishment is death; death not merely of the body, but of the soul; not merely temporal but eternal. It is a comprehensive term therefore to express all the evils in this world and the world to come, which are the penal consequences of sin. In this sense it is to be understood in the threatening made to our first parents; in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* and when the prophet says, The soul that sinneth it shall die;† and when the Apostle says, The wages of sin is death.‡ The same general idea is expressed by the word curse, As many as are of the law are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;§ and also by the word wrath, We were by nature the children of wrath,‖ The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.¶

These and similar passages teach that sinners are the objects of the divine displeasure, and that this displeasure will certainly be manifested. As God is infinitely good and the fountain of all blessedness, his displeasure must be the greatest of all

* Gen. ii. 17. † Ezek. xviii. 4. ‡ Rom. vi. 23.
§ Gal. iii 10. ‖ Eph. ii. 3. ¶ Rom. i. 18

evils. The Scriptures, however, in order to impress this truth more deeply upon our minds, employ the strongest terms human language affords, to set forth the dreadful import of God's displeasure. Those who obey not the gospel, it is said, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.* Our Saviour says, The wicked shall be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.† At the last great day, he tells us, the judge shall say to those upon his left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.‡ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.§ In the last day, all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation;‖ or as it is expressed in Daniel,¶ to shame and everlasting contempt.

Whatever explanation may be given of the terms

* 2 Thess. 1, 9. † Mark. ix. 43, 44. ‡ Matt. xxv. 41
§ Matt. xiii. 41, 42. ‖ John v. 29. ¶ Daniel xii. 2.

employed in these and many similar passages, there can be no doubt that they are intended to convey the idea of endless and hopeless misery. Whence this misery shall arise, or wherein it shall consist are questions of minor importance. It is sufficient that the Scriptures teach that the sufferings here spoken of, are in degree inconceivably great and in duration endless. The most fearful exhibition given of the future state of the impenitent, is that which presents them as reprobates, as abandoned to the unrestrained dominion of evil. The repressing influence of conscience, of a probationary state, of a regard to character, of good example, and above all of the Holy Spirit, will be withdrawn, and unmingled malignity, impurity and violence constitute the character and condition of those who finally perish. The wicked are represented as constantly blaspheming God, while they gnaw their tongues with pain.* The God who pronounces this doom upon sinners, is he who said, As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The most fearful of these passages fell from the lips of the Lamb of God, who came to die that we might not perish, but have eternal life.

It must be remembered that it is not against the chief of sinners that this dreadful punishment is

* Rev. xvi. 10.

denounced. It is against sin, one sin, any sin. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.† As far as we know, the angels were punished for their first offence. Adam and his race fell by one transgression. Human governments act on the same principle. If a man commit murder, he suffers death for the one offence. If he is guilty of treason, he finds no defence in his freedom from other crimes. Sin is apostasy from God; it breaks our communion with him, and is the ruin of the soul.

The displeasure of God against sin and his fixed determination to punish it, are also manifested by the certain connexion which he has established between sin and suffering. It is the undeniable tendency of sin to produce misery; and although in this world the good are not always more happy than the wicked, this only shows that the present is a state of trial and not of retribution. It affords no evidence to contradict the proof of the purpose of God to punish sin, derived from the obvious and necessary tendency of sin to produce misery. This tendency is as much a law of nature as any other law with which we are acquainted. Men

* Gal. iii 10. † James ii. 10.

flatter themselves that they will escape the evil consequences of their transgressions by appealing to the mercy of God, and obtaining a suspension of this law in their behalf. They might as reasonably expect the law of gravitation to be suspended for their convenience. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, as certainly as he who sows tares shall reap tares. The only link which binds together causes and effects in nature, is the will of God; and the same will, no less clearly revealed, connects suffering with sin. And this is a connexion absolutely indissoluble save by the mystery of redemption.

To suspend the operation of a law of nature, (as to stop the sun in his course,) is merely an exercise of power. But to save sinners from the curse of the law required that Christ should be made a curse for us; that he should bear our sins in his own body on the tree; that he should be made sin for us and die the just for the unjust. It would be a reflection on the wisdom of God to suppose that he would employ means to accomplish an end more costly than that end required. Could our redemption have been effected by corruptible things, as silver or gold, or could the blood of bulls or of goats have taken away sin, who can believe that Christ would have died? The apostle clearly teaches that it is to make the death of Christ vain,

to affirm that our salvation could have been otherwise secured.* Since, then, in order to the pardon of sin, the death of Christ was necessary, it is evident that the evil of sin in the sight of God must be estimated by the dignity of him who died for our redemption. Here we approach the most mysterious and awful doctrine of the Bible. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.† God therefore was manifested in the flesh. He who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.‡ He then—who is declared to be the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power; whom all the angels are commanded to worship; of whom the Scriptures say, Thy throne O God is for ever and ever

* Gal ii. 21. † John i. 1, 3, 14. ‡ Phil. ii. 6, 7

Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; They shall perish, but thou remainest; they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail—even He, who is God over all and blessed forever, inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, himself also took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

It is the doctrine of the Bible that the infinite and eternal Son of God assumed our nature, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. It is obvious that no severity of mere human suffering; no destroying deluge; no final conflagration, not hell itself can present such a manifestation of the evil of sin and of the justice of God as the cross of his incarnate Son. It declares in language which is heard by the whole intelligent universe, that sin deserves God's wrath and curse, and that none who refuse submission to the appointed method of pardon, can escape its condemnation.

The penalty then which God has attached to the violation of his law, the certainty with which that

penalty is inflicted, the doom of the fallen angels, the consequences of Adam's sin, and above all the death of Christ, are manifestations of the evil of sin in the estimation of God, which it is the highest infatuation for us to disregard.

However obdurate our hearts may be in reference to this subject, our reason is not so blind as not to see that our guilt must be exceedingly great. We cannot deny that all the circumstances which aggravate the heinousness of sin concur in our case. The law which we transgress is perfectly good. It is the law of God; the law of right and reason. It is the expression of the highest excellence; it is suited to our nature, necessary to our perfection and happiness. Opposition to such a law must be in the highest degree unreasonable and wicked.

This law is enforced not only by its own excellence but by the authority of God. Disregard of this authority is the greatest crime of which a creature is capable It is rebellion against a being whose right to command is founded on his infinite superiority, his infinite goodness and his absolute propriety in us as his creatures. It is apostasy from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of Satan. There is no middle ground between the two. Every one is either the servant of God, or the servant of the devil. Holiness is the evidence of our allegiance to our maker, sin is the service of Satan. Could

we form any adequate conception of these two kingdoms, of the intrinsic excellence of the one nd the absolute evil of the other, of the blessedness attendant on the one and the misery connected with he other; could we in short bring heaven and hell in mmediate contrast, we might have some proper view of the guilt of this apostasy from God. It is the natural tendency of our conduct to degrade ourselves and others, to make Eden like Sodom, and to kindle every where the fire that never shall be quenched. This cannot be denied, for moral evil is the greatest of all evils and the certain cause of all others. He therefore who sins is not only a rebel against God, but a malefactor, an enemy to the highest good of his fellow creatures.

Again, our guilt is great because our sins are exceedingly numerous. It is not merely outward acts of unkindness and dishonesty with which we are chargeable, our habitual and characteristic state of mind is evil in the sight of God. Our pride vanity, indifference to his will and to the welfare of others, our selfishness, our loving the creature more than the Creator, are continuous violations of his law. We have never, in any one moment of our lives, been or done what that law requires us to be and to do. We have never had that delight in the divine perfections, that sense of dependence and obligation, that fixed purpose to do the will and

promote the glory of God, which constitute the love which is our first and highest duty. It is in this sense that mankind are said to be totally depraved; they are entirely destitute of supreme love to God. Whatever else they may have is as nothing while this is wanting. They may be affectionate fathers or kind masters, or dutiful sons and daughters, but they are not obedient children of God; they have not those feelings towards God which constitute their first and greatest duty, and without which they are always transgressors. The man who is a rebel against his righteous sovereign, and whose heart is full of enmity to his person and government, may be faithful to his associates and kind to his dependents, but he is always and increasingly guilty as it regards his ruler. Thus we are always sinners; we are at all times and under all circumstances in opposition to God, because we are never what his law requires us to be. If we have never loved him supremely; if we have never made it our governing purpose to do his will; if we have never been properly grateful for all his mercies; if we have never made his glory, but some other and lower object, the end of our actions; then our lives have been an unbroken series of transgressions. Our sins are not to be numbered by the conscious violations of duty; they are as numerous as the moments of our existence.

If the permanent moral dispositions of a man are evil, it must follow that his acts of transgression will be past counting up. Every hour there is some work of evil, some wrong thought, some bad feeling, some improper word, or some wicked act, to add to the number of his offences. The evil exercise of an evil heart is like the ceaseless swinging of the pendulum. The slightest review of life therefore is sufficient to overwhelm us with the conviction of the countless multitude of our transgressions. It is this which constitutes our exceeding sinfulness in the sight of God. While conscience sleeps, or our attention is directed to other subjects, the number of our transgressions grows like the unnoticed pulsations of our heart. It is not until we pause and call ourselves to an account, that we see how many feelings have been wrong; how great is the distance at which we habitually live from God, and how constant is our want of conformity to his will. It was this that forced the Psalmist to cry, Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up, they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.

Again, we may judge of the greatness of our guilt before God, by considering the numerous restraints of his truth, providence and spirit, which we habitually disregard. The simple fact that sin

is wrong, that conscience condemns it, is a constant and powerful restraint. We cannot avail ourselves of the plea of ignorance, as we have a perfect standard of duty in the law of God. We cannot resist the conviction that his commands are righteous, yet, in despite of this conviction, we live in constant disobedience.

We are, moreover, fully aware of the consequences of sin. We know the judgment of God that those who do such things are worthy of death, and yet continue our transgressions. We are surprised at the drunkard who indulges his fatal passion in the very presence of ruin; yet are blind to our own infatuation in continuing to disobey God in despite of threatened death. We stupidly disregard the certain consequences of our conduct, and awake only in time to see that madness is in our hearts. This insensibility, notwithstanding the occasional admonitions of conscience and the constant warnings of the word of God, constitutes a peculiar aggravation of our guilt.

Nor are we more mindful of the restraining influence of the love of God. We disregard the fact that the Being against whom we sin, is He to whom we owe our existence and all our enjoyments; who has carried us in his arms, and crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies; who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plen-

teous in mercy; who has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, but has borne with our provocations, waiting that his goodness might lead us to repentance We have despised his forbearance, deriving from it a motive to sin, as though he were slack concerning his promises, and would not accomplish his threatenings; thus treasuring up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Besides all this, we disregard the love of Christ. He came to save us from our sins, and we will not accept of his mediation, or reciprocate his love. There stands his cross, mutely eloquent; at once an invitation and a warning. It tells us both of the love and justice of God. It assures us that he who spared not his own Son, is ready to be gracious. All this we disregard. We count the blood of the covenant, an unholy thing; we act as if it were not the blood of the Son of God, shed for us for the remission of sins. Or, it may be, we turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and draw encouragement from the death of Christ to continue in sin. This unbelieving rejection of the Saviour involves guilt so peculiarly great, that it is often spoken of as the special ground of the condemnation of the world. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the only begotten

Son of God. When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me. If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God!

This great sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as a Saviour, it must be remembered, is an often repeated and long continued sin. It is also one which is chargeable not on the openly wicked merely, but upon those whom the world calls moral. They too resist the claims of the Son of God; they too refuse his love and reject his offers. It was when all other messengers had failed, the Lord of the vineyard sent his Son to his disobedient servants, saying, They will reverence my Son. The guilt of thus rejecting Christ, will never be fully appreciated until the day when He shall sit on the throne and from his face the earth and heaven shall flee away and no place be found for them.

Besides these restraints from without, we resist the still more powerful influence of the Spirit of God. That Spirit strives with all men; suggesting truth and exciting conscience, expostulating and warning, and drawing men from sin to God. It is from Him that all good thoughts and right purposes do proceed. This spirit we quench; we

resist his gracious influences, not once or twice, but a thousand times. Though he will not always strive with men, he strives long, and returns after many insulting rejections, repeating the warnings and invitations of mercy. All men are sensible of this divine influence, though they may not be aware of its origin. They know not whence proceed the serious thoughts, the anxious forebodings, the convictions of truth, the sense of the emptiness of the world, the longing after security and peace of which they are conscious. God sends these admonitions even to those who are most contented with the world and most happy in their estrangement from himself. He leaves no man without a witness and a warning. These strivings of the Spirit are not only frequent, but often urgent. Almost every man can look back and see many instances in which an unseen hand was upon him, when a voice, not from man, has sounded in his ears, when feelings to which he was before a stranger were awakened in his breast, and when he felt the power of the world to come. The shadow of the Almighty has passed over him, and produced the conviction that God is, and that He is an avenger.

From a review of what has been said it is plain that the Scriptures teach not only that all men are sinners, but that their corruption is radical, seated in their hearts, and that it is exceedingly great

The severity of the penalty which God has attached to transgression, the certainty of its infliction, the costliness of the sacrifice by which alone its pardon could be obtained, are all proofs of the evil of sin in the sight of God. The greatness of our personal guilt is plain from the excellence of the law which we have violated; from the authority and goodness of the Being whom we have offended, from the number of our sins, and from the powerful restraints which we have disregarded.

CHAPTER III.

CAUSES OF INDIFFERENCE TO THE CHARGE OF SIN

SECTION I. *Sin, want of consideration, striving against the Spirit.*

THE charge of sin is brought so directly in the word of God against every human being, and is so fully sustained by observation and experience, that the general indifference of men under so weighty an accusation is a fact which needs explanation. Indifference is no proof of innocence, any more than insensibility to pain is a proof of health. In ordinary cases indeed, a man cannot be ill without knowing it, but his sensations are a very unsafe criterion of the nature or danger of his disease. He may be most free from pain, when most in peril. In like manner, the indifference of men to their own sinfulness affords no presumption that their guilt is not great in the sight of God. The absence of the immediate consciousness of guilt is no proof of innocence, unless attended by the joyful exercise of all right feelings. When accompanied by indif

ference to duty and the indulgence of sin, it is the evidence of the depth of our depravity. All men assume this to be true in their judgments of those more wicked than themselves. To say of a man, he is a hardened wretch, is not the language of extenuation or apology. It is the language of aggravated condemnation. Those who feel thus keenly with regard to others, that indifference is an aggravation of guilt, strangely imagine it to be, in their own case, a proof of comparative innocence.

This insensibility of men, therefore, to the moral turpitude of their character in the sight of God, so far from being an indication of goodness, is the result and evidence of the extent of their corruption. As in bodily disease when the seat of life is attacked, the sensibilities are weakened, so in the disease of sin, insensibility is one of its symptoms, and increases with the increase of the evil. Sin produces this effect both by blinding the mind and by hardening the heart. It obscures our apprehensions of the excellence of God and of his law, and it produces a callousness of feeling, so that what is seen is not regarded. Experience teaches us that a mere change in the state of the mind, produces an immediate and entire change in our apprehensions and feelings in reference to our own sins. The man who at one hour was indifferent as the most careless, at the next, is filled with astonishment and remorse. Others

think his feelings unreasonable and exaggerated; he knows them to be rational and even inadequate This is not the result of any hallucination or mistaken apprehensions of God or of his own character. It is the natural effect of an enlightened mind and of an awakened conscience. The ease and frequency with which the indifference of men to their guilt in the sight of God, is destroyed, is of itself a proof that their insensibility is not based upon truth; that it is the effect of a darkened understanding and a hardened heart, and that though it may increase as sin gains the ascendency, it vanishes the moment the light and power of truth are let in upon the soul.

Besides this general cause of the indifference of men to the declarations of God regarding their sinfulness, there are others which ought to be specified. When the prophet contemplated the impenitent unconcern of the people, he exclaimed, Israel doth not know, my people do not consider. And when God would rouse them to a sense of their guilt, he says, Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. It is this want of consideration, more than any difficulty in arriving at the truth, which sets men in such opposition to God in their judgments of themselves, and which hardens them in their indifference. This inconsideration indeed is but an effect of the more general

cause already referred to, but it becomes in its turn a cause both of ignorance and unconcern. Men learn little upon any subject by intuition, and the knowledge of their own hearts is not to be obtained without painful self-examination. This self-knowledge is the subject to which men generally devote the least attention. They are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of the world. They either float quietly down the stream of life, or are hurried along its troubled course, with scarcely an hour given to serious reflection. That under such circumstances men should be ignorant of themselves and indifferent to their character in the sight of God, is not only natural but unavoidable. It is however a lamentable thing that they should make a judgment of themselves formed without consideration, the ground of their conduct, and confide in it in opposition to the judgment of God. If they will judge, let them at least consider. If they will act on their own conclusions respecting themselves, let them at least examine and decide deliberately, and not venture every thing on a hasty, unconsidered estimate of their character, which, it may be, could not stand, even in their own judgment, a moment's inspection.

Men, however, are not merely inconsiderate, they often make direct efforts to suppress the rising conviction of guilt and danger. The testimony of God

against them is so plain; the authority of his law is so obvious; their want of conformity to it is so glaring, and the influences of the Spirit are so general and frequent, that the conviction of sin can hardly fail to obtrude itself even upon those who in general are the most unconcerned. It is, however, a painful conviction, and therefore, instead of being cherished, it is disregarded or suppressed. The mind refuses to dwell upon the subject, or to examine the evidence of guilt, but either turns to other objects, or, by some act of levity or transgression, grieves away the Spirit of God and hardens itself in unconcern. This is a frequently recurring experience in the history of most men. They have more anxious thoughts than they allow their most intimate friends to suspect; they often mask an aching heart with a smiling face. They have a quick foresight of what such feelings must lead to, if cherished. They see, at once, that they cannot cultivate such sentiments, and live as they have been accustomed to do. There are pleasures, and it may be sins, which must be abandoned. There are companions who must be avoided. There is the opposition of friends, the ridicule of associates, the loss of rank, to be encountered. All the horrors of a religious life present themselves to the imagination, and frighten the half awakened from considering their ways which they know to be

out the first step in what appears a long and painful journey. They therefore struggle against their convictions, and in general master them. This struggle is sometimes short; at others, it is protracted and painful. Victory however comes at last, and the soul regains its wonted unconcern. Such persons little know what they are doing. They little suspect that they are struggling to elude the grasp of mercy; that they are striving against the Spirit of God, who would draw them from the paths of destruction, and guide them into the way of life.

SECTION II. *Sophistical objections against the doctrine of the Bible.*

Another cause of the indifference of men may be found in the objections which they urge against the truth. Such objections indeed are more frequently and effectually urged to perplex the advocates of religion, than to quiet the uneasiness of conscience. Still men endeavour to impose upon themselves as well as to embarrass others. And the objections referred to, doubtless are often obstacles in the way of the inquirer; or opiates to the consciences of those who desire to be deceived. It is objected that we are what God made us; that our character is determined either by our original

constitution, or by the circumstances in which we are placed, and therefore we cannot be responsible for it; that inasmuch as neither our belief nor our affections are under the control of the will, we cannot be accountable for either; that it is useless to use means to escape the judgment of God, since what is to be, will be; that we must wait till God sees fit to change our hearts, since it is declared in Scripture to be his work.

It will be observed that these and similar objections relate to the reconciliation of different truths, and not to their separate validity or evidence. The proposition that men are responsible for their moral character, taken by itself, is so capable of demonstration, that all men do in fact believe it. Every man feels it to be true with regard to himself, and knows it to be true with regard to others. All self-condemnation and self-approbation rest on the consciousness of this truth. All our judgments regarding the moral conduct of others are founded on the same assumption. It is, therefore, one of those truths which is included in the universal consciousness of men, and has in all ages and nations been assumed as certain. Men cannot really doubt it, if they would. On the other hand, it is no less certain that our character does depend in a measure upon circumstances beyond our control; upon our original constitution, upon education, upon prevalent

habits and opinions, upon divine influence, &c. All this is proved by experience and observation Here then are two facts resting on independent evidence, each certain and each by itself securing general assent. Yet we see men constantly disposed to bring up the one against the other; and argue against their responsibility, because they are dependent, or against their dependence, because they are responsible.

In like manner the proposition that man is a free agent commands immediate and universal assent, because it is an ultimate fact of consciousness. It can no more be doubted than we can doubt our own existence. Side by side however with this intimate persuasion of our moral liberty, lies the conviction, no less intimate, of our inability to change, by merely willing to do so, either our belief or our affections, for which, as before stated, every man knows himself to be responsible. Perhaps few men,—perhaps no man,—can see the harmony of these truths; yet they are truths, and as such are practically acknowledged by all men.

Again, all experience teaches us that we live in a world of means, that knowledge, religion, happiness, are all to be sought in a certain way, and that to neglect the means is to lose the end. It is, however, no less true that there is no necessary or certain connection between the means and the end;

that God holds the result in his own hands and decides the issues according to his sovereign pleasure. In all the ordinary affairs of life men submit to this arrangement and do not hesitate to use means, though the end is uncertain and beyond their control. But in religion, they think this uncertainty of the result a sufficient excuse for neglect.

It is obvious that this method of reasoning, or rather of cavilling, which consists in bringing up one well established truth against another, is unworthy of a rational being. We ought to, (and practically, we must) receive every truth on its own evidence. If we cannot reconcile one fact with another, it is because of our ignorance; better instructed men or higher orders of beings may see their perfect harmony. Our want of such knowledge does not in the least impair the force of the evidence on which they separately rest. In every department of knowledge the number of irreconcileable truths depends on the progress of the student. That loose matter flies off from revolving bodies, and that every thing adheres to the surface of the earth, notwithstanding its rapid revolution, are irreconcilable facts to one man, though not to another That two rays of light should produce darkness, or two sounds cause silence, are facts which many may be entirely unable to reconcile

with other facts of which they are certain, while the philosopher sees not only their consistency, but that they are the necessary consequences of the same cause.

If the evidence of the constant revolution of the earth round its axis were presented to a man, it would certainly be unreasonable in him to deny the fact, merely because he could not reconcile it with the stability of every thing on the earth's surface. Or if he saw two rays of light made to produce darkness, must he resist the evidence of his senses because he knows that two candles give more light than one? Men do not commonly act thus irrationally in physical investigations. They let each fact stand on its own evidence. They strive to reconcile them and are happy when they succeed. But they do not get rid of difficulties by denying facts.

If in the department of physical knowledge we are obliged to act upon the principle of receiving every fact upon its own evidence, even when unable to reconcile one with another, it is not wonderful that this necessity should be imposed upon us in those departments of knowledge, which are less within the limits of our powers. It is certainly irrational for a man to reject all the evidence of the spirituality of the soul, because he cannot reconcile with that doctrine the fact that a disease of the

body disorders the mind. Must I do violence to my nature in denying the proof of design afforded by the human body, because I cannot account for the occasional occurrence of deformities of structure? Must I harden my heart against all the evidence of the benevolence of God, which streams upon me in a flood of light from all his works, because I may not know how to reconcile that benevolence with the existence of evil? Must I deny my free agency, the most intimate of all convictions, because I cannot see the consistency between the freeness of an act and the certainty of its occurrence? Must I deny that I am a moral being, the very glory of my nature, because I cannot change my character at will?

It is impossible for any man to act, in any department of knowledge, upon the principle, on which these cavilling objections to religion are founded. From youth to age we are obliged to take each fact as it comes, upon its own evidence, and reconcile it with other facts, as best we may.

The unreasonableness of this method of arguing is further evident from the consideration that if it were universally adopted it would render all progress in knowledge impossible. It would be tantamount to a resolution to know nothing until we know all things; for our knowledge at first is confined to isolated facts. To classify and harmonize

these facts, is the slow work of the student's life This is a most benevolent arrangement of providence. It at once stimulates the desire of knowledge and imposes on us the constant exercise of faith. And it is in virtue of these two important principles of our nature that all valuable knowledge is obtained. The desire of knowing not merely facts, but their relations and harmony, leads to the constant effort to increase the number of known truths and to obtain an insight into their nature; and the necessity we are under of believing what we cannot understand, or cannot reconcile, cultivates the habit of faith; of faith in evidence, faith in the laws of our nature, faith in God. It is thus our heavenly Father leads us along the paths of knowledge; and he who refuses to be thus led, must remain in ignorance. God deals with us as children; though as rational children. He does not require us to believe without evidence; but he does require us to believe what we cannot understand, and what we cannot reconcile with other parts of knowledge. This necessity of implicit faith is not confined to any one department of knowledge, but as already stated, is constantly demanded with regard to all. The simplest objects in the physical world are surrounded with mysteries. A blade of grass has wonders about it which no philosopher can clear up; no man can tell what fixes the type of each

species of plant or animal; by what process the materials of leaf and flower are selected and arranged; whence the beautiful tints are borrowed or how applied; what conducts the silent process of formation of the eye or hand. Every thing we see is, even to the most enlightened, the index of something unknown and inscrutable.

If the visible and tangible forms of matter are replete with things past finding out, what may we expect when we turn our eyes on the world of Spirits? Even that little world in our own bosoms which is pervaded by our own consciousness, the facts of which are most intimately known, is full of wonders; of phenomena which we can neither comprehend nor reconcile. Who can understand the secret union of the soul and body, which establishes their reciprocal influence? Why should the emotion of shame suffuse the cheek, or that of fear send the blood to the heart? Why does the soul suffer if the body be injured? What conception can we form either of matter or mind which is consistent with their mutual influence and communion? The operations of our rational and moral faculties are not less beyond our comprehension. We know certain facts, but the reason of them, or their consistency we cannot understand. We know that certain feelings follow certain perceptions; the feeling of confidence the perception of truth; th

feeling of pleasure the perception of beauty; the feeling of approbation the perception of what is morally right. Why these feelings should thus rise no one can tell. Such are the laws of our being; laws which we did not originate and which we cannot control. That is, we cannot prevent the feeling of confidence or faith, attending the perception of truth, nor that of pleasure, the perception of beauty, nor that of approbation, the perception of moral rectitude Yet the consciousness of self-agency mingles with all these operations. We are free in being subject to the laws of our own nature. The necessity under which we form such judgments or exercise such feelings produces no sense of bondage. In these involuntary or necessary judgments or feelings, however, our moral character is largely concerned. If two men see an act of cruelty, and the one smiles at it, and the other is indignant, no sophistry can prevent our condemning the former and approving the latter. The feeling excited by the act arises in each spontaneously and by an inward necessity which neither, at the moment, can control. The knowledge of this fact does not interfere with our judgment in the case. And that judgment is not merely that the feeling which produced the smile, is an indication of a state of mind, or of previous conduct worthy of disapprobation, but that the feeling itself was

wrong. Moreover the feeling of disapprobation which arises thus spontaneously in our bosoms, at this delight in suffering, is itself a moral feeling. We should condemn ourselves if it did not arise, we approve ourselves because of it. There are therefore, in our own breasts, enigmas which we cannot solve, depths which we cannot fathom. Must we then, in order to be rational, deny these facts? Must we maintain that our nature is an illusion and our constitution a falsehood? Shall we, on the one hand, deny that we are subject to the laws of our being, or, on the other, that the acts which result from those laws are not our own, do not express our character nor involve responsibility? This happily cannot be done, for faith in our own consciousness is one of the laws of our nature from which we can never effectually emancipate ourselves.

If then there are in our own nature so many things which we cannot comprehend, how can we expect to understand God, to know the reasons and relations of his acts, or to be able to reconcile in all cases his works with his attributes? To do this would require a more thorough knowledge of God than we have of ourselves. It would require a comprehension of his purposes and of the mode in which he accomplishes them. It would require in short a knowledge which no creature can possess.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. We then, who are the least and lowest of God's rational creatures, may well expect to be required to live by faith; to receive, as true, on his authority, much that we cannot understand and cannot reconcile. It is not however blind belief which is required of us. We are not required to believe any thing without adequate evidence; but on the other hand we are not allowed to reject any thing simply because we cannot understand it. We must not reject the existence of God, because we cannot comprehend self-existence; we must not deny his eternity, because we cannot conceive of duration without succession, nor his omnipresence, because we cannot see how a being can be equally and entirely in all places at the same time; nor omniscience, because we cannot see how free acts can be foreknown. In like manner we are not required to believe in God's goodness without abundant evidence of his benevolence; but we are required to believe it, whether we can reconcile it with the existence of evil or not. We are not required to believe in the providence of God without evidence, but our being unable to reconcile his government with our liberty, is no rational ground of unbelief. The same remark might be made with

regard to the apostasy of our race and the corruption of our nature; our inability and obligation to obedience; the necessity of divine influence and the use of means. We are required to believe nothing on these or any other subjects without adequate proof, but we are not allowed to make our ignorance of the relations of these truths an excuse for either unbelief or disobedience. God gives to the glow worm light enough to see its own path, though not enough to dispel the darkness of the night. Thus too he shows us where to put our foot down in each successive step towards heaven, though he may not enable us to comprehend the Almighty unto perfection.

It may be said that we have not answered one of all the objections to which reference has so often been made. We have done far better than answer them, if we have made the reader feel the necessity of an humble, trustful spirit towards God. This is the appropriate state of mind for every learner, whether in the school of nature or of Christ. It is that state which the feebleness of our powers and the difficulty of the things to be learned, render not only reasonable but indispensable. A second impression which we have laboured to produce is, that it is one of our primary duties to submit to the truth, to form the purpose and to cherish the habit of yielding the mind to evidence. Faith without

evidence is irrational; but unbelief in despite of evidence is not less so. There is a great difference, in the temper of different men in relation to this subject. Some resist the truth as long as they can; they cavil at it and oppose it. Others are candid and docile; they are willing to admit the force of proof as far as they perceive it. This is the only way in which true knowledge can be obtained. It is thus the philosopher is accustomed to act. He carefully interrogates nature for facts; these facts are received; they are classified and harmonized as far as the investigator is able thus to reconcile them. But he rejects none because he cannot make it fit into a system. He waits for further light. It is thus we are bound to act. We too are called upon to receive every truth upon its own evidence; to harmonize our knowledge where we can, but to reject nothing simply because of our ignorance of its consistency with other truths.

A third lesson which it is very important for us to learn is, what is adequate evidence of truth and when we are bound to rest satisfied. This may be a question which it is difficult to decide; but as far as religion is concerned the case is sufficiently plain. By the laws of our being we are imperatively required to confide in the well ascertained testimony of our senses; to rely upon the veracity of our own consciousness; to receive the unim

peachable testimony of our fellow men, and to abide by those truths which are matters of intuitive perception, or the necessary conclusions of reason. These are laws of belief impressed upon our constitution by our creator; and are therefore the authoritative expressions of his will. To refuse obedience to these laws is, then, not only unreasonable, it is rebellion against God. They are the adamantine bars by which he has closed up the way to universal scepticism; and those who break through them do but prematurely enter upon the outer darkness. We are obliged then as rational beings to receive every truth which rests upon the testimony of our senses, upon the authority of consciousness, the unimpeachable testimony of witnesses, or the intuitive perceptions or necessary deductions of reason. Whether we can systematize and reconcile all the truths thus arrived at, is a very different question. Our obligation to receive them does not rest upon this power, but upon the evidence afforded for each separate truth. Our consciousness tells us that we are sinners; it also informs us of our helplessness. We may fight against one or the other of these truths as the ocean chafes the rocks. They cannot be moved. When the mind has been drugged with false philosophy, it may for a time disbelieve. But the infidelity lasts no longer than the intoxication. As

soon as the man is sober, the truth re-appears in greater clearness and authority than ever. Nothing therefore can be eventually gained by resistance to the truth, and it is the part of wisdom to submit at once to the laws of belief which God has impressed upon our nature.

Besides this rule of faith, (if it may be so called,) which God has given us in the constitution of our nature, we have his word and his providence, authenticated by all kinds of adequate testimony. There can be no higher ground of faith than the authority of God. Even confidence in the testimony of our senses or the dictates of consciousness, resolves itself into confidence in the veracity of God, by whom the laws of nature have been established. Any truth therefore which is sustained by a well authenticated revelation of God, or upon the actual dispensations of his providence, must be considered as fully established; and every objection which can be shown to militate against either, must be considered as fully answered. It was thus that the sacred writers answered objections. It was enough for them that God asserted any truth, or actually exercised any prerogative. Any further vindication they deemed unnecessary. We should act on the same principle and quietly submit to all that God says and to all he does. Some men complainingly ask, Why were we born? Surely it is enough that

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they are born. The fact cannot be denied. whether they can see the wisdom and design of their creation or not. Or they ask, Why were we born in a state of sin, or in a world in which sin is universal and inevitable? This, to human reason, may be a question impossible to answer. But as the fact stares us in face, is there any use in denying it? But it is further asked, If we are born in such a state that either from our nature or circumstances sin is inevitable and universal, how can we be responsible? Whatever difficulty there may be in showing how we are responsible, there is no doubt as to the fact. We feel ourselves to be responsible, and can no more free ourselves of the conviction than we can get rid of the consciousness of existence. Where then is the wisdom of quarrelling with facts? Why should we spend our lives like a wild beast in a cage forever chafing against the bars of its prison, which nevertheless remain? Let us learn to submit to what we see to be true; let us remember that our knowledge does not embrace all truth; that things may be perfectly consistent with each other and with the attributes of God, though we may not see how. Our knowledge will continually increase; and those facts which give us most difficulty will be found to be so analogous to others, the justice of which we are able to recognise, that if we never come to see all things in

their harmony, we shall at least see that they must be consistent, being parts of that system which is every where luminous with the manifestations of the wisdom and love of God. Let us remember that we are children, the children of God, that he gives us abundant evidence of every thing which he requires us to believe, though he renders it necessary for us to exercise confidence in him, to feel assured that what he says is true and that what he does is right; that though clouds and darkness may be round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

The last general remark to be made in reference to these objections, is, that they are almost always dishonestly urged; that is, they are urged with an inward conviction of their fallacy. As in many cases we know things to be true, which we cannot prove, so we often know objections to be fallacious which we cannot answer. If a man denies his own existence, or the distinction between right and wrong, it is in vain to argue with him. There can be nothing plainer than the truth denied, and therefore there can be no means of proving it So also, if, to escape the charge of guilt, he denies his responsibility, he denies a fact of consciousness, which cannot possibly be made plainer. Or if he plead his inability as an excuse for not repenting and obeying God, he presents a plea which he

knows has no validity. He knows that however real this inability may be, it is of such a nature as to afford no excuse for his continuing in sin, because the conviction of its reality co-exists, in his own consciousness, with a sense of guilt. It is a plea therefore that does not avail at the bar of his own conscience, and he knows that it will not avail at the bar of God. In like manner, when men object to the strictness of the divine law, they do so with the inward persuasion of the righteousness of that law. Its requirements commend themselves to their conscience. They know that as God is infinitely wise and good, it is right that we should regard him with supreme affection, and implicitly submit to all his directions.

All such cavilling objections, men know to be false. God has not left himself without a witness. His voice has an authority which we cannot resist. When he tells us we are sinners, we know it to be true. When he tells us that we are worthy of death, we know it to be a righteous judgment. When he tells us that we have no strength to save ourselves and that our salvation depends upon his will, we know it to be even so. Whenever he reveals himself our mouths are shut. not from fear merely, but from an intimate persuasion of the justice of all his ways. It is then, both foolish and wicked to urge objections

against the truth, which we ourselves know to be futile, whether this be done with a view to perplex our fellow-men, or in the vain endeavour to silence the accusations of conscience and the word of God.

Such is the power of truth that neither the natura insensibility of the heart, nor the want of consideration, nor the direct efforts which men make to suppress serious thoughts, nor the whole array of sophistical objections, can avail to counteract the secret conviction in the breast of the impenitent that they are in the road to eternal death. This conviction is often very weak. When men are engrossed in the concerns of this world, it is overlooked. Still it is there; and it is ever and anon waking up to trouble them. Nor can the suggestion that God is merciful and, peradventure, will not be strict to mark iniquity, quiet this uneasy apprehension. This suggestion, therefore, avails but little. It is counteracted by the sense of ill-desert, by the irrepressible conviction that those who commit sin are worthy of death; by the plain declarations of Scripture, and by the evidence which even providence affords that God is righteous. The vague apprehension of coming wrath, therefore, in despite of all their efforts, still haunts the path of the im penitent. It chills their joys and gathers strength

whenever the world seems to be receding from their grasp.

Most men are driven to enter the plea of guilty before the bar of conscience, and content themselves with praying for a delay of judgment. They are forced to admit that they are not fit to die in their present state; that they are bound to comply with the requirement of the gospel, but they plead for time. Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee. Conscience is more easily deluded by this plea, which seems to admit its demands, than by any other. It is, therefore, the most dangerous snare for souls. Men do not reflect on the wickedness of pleading with God for liberty to continue, a little longer in sin; to be allowed to break his commandments, to disregard his mercies, to slight his love, and to injure the cause of truth and righteousness. They do not think of the indignation with which they would reject such a plea from an ungrateful and disobedient son or servant. Nor do they remember that every such act of procrastination is a great aggravation of their guilt, as it supposes a consciousness of the evil of their present course and a recognition of the righteousness of all the demands of God. Nor do they consider that the difficulties which beset the path of their return to God are al'

increased by delay. If the work of repentance be irksome to-day, it will be more irksome to-morrow. If the heart be now hard, it will become yet harder by neglect. If the power of sin be now too strong for us to resist, it will become still stronger by indulgence. If the motives to repentance now fail to secure obedience, they will act with constantly increasing disadvantage hereafter. If God be justly displeased now, he will be more and more displeased by continued disobedience. Every day's procrastination therefore increases, at a fearful rate, the probability of our final perdition.

CHAPTER IV.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

SECTION I. *Knowledge of sin. Sense of personal ill-desert.*

THOUGH men are generally so indifferent to their sinfulness and danger, it often pleases God to arouse their attention, and to produce a deep conviction of the truth of all that the Bible teaches on these subjects. The effects of such conviction are very various, because they are modified by the temperament, the knowledge, the circumstances and concomitant exercises of those who experience it. A sentence of death, if passed upon a hundred men, would probably affect no two of them alike. The mind of one might fasten particularly on the turpitude of his crime; that of another upon the disgrace which he had incurred; that of a third on the sufferings of his friends on his account; that of a fourth upon the horrors of death, or upon the fearfulness of appearing before God. All these and many other views, in endless combination, might operate with

different degrees of force on each, and the result be still further modified by their physical and moral temperament, their knowledge and previous history. The endless diversity, therefore, in the experience of men when convinced of sin, is what might be expected; and shows it to be impossible to give any description of such experience that shall be applicable to all cases. It will be sufficient briefly to state, what the Scriptures teach to be necessary on this subject.

There must be some correct knowledge of sin. It is clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures, confirmed by universal experience, that men are naturally exceedingly blind on this subject. They have very inadequate ideas of the nature of this evil. Being ignorant of the holiness of God, they do not regard the opposition of sin to his nature so much as its effects upon themselves, or upon society. They judge of it by a wrong standard, and hence all their judgments respecting it are either erroneous or defective. Its real nature, or the real source of its evil in a great measure escapes their notice. Hence a thousand things which are unquestionably sinful, they in general overlook or disregard. It is not so much the state of the heart towards God, as the temper and deportment of one man towards his fellow men, that they consider. And therefore they often regard themselves and others as really good

though they may be destitute of any one right sentiment towards their maker. Being ignorant of the true nature of sin, they have no conception of the number of their transgressions. They are disposed to estimate them by the number of positive or overt acts of disobedience to the moral law; overlooking the habitual state of the heart, the uniform want of love, faith, and due reverence towards God. Nor have they any adequate idea of the guilt of sin. It is to them, as it exists in themselves, comparatively a trifle. Any great concern about it, they consider unreasonable; and when manifested by others, hypocritical or fanatical. There is a deceitfulness in sin by which men are deluded so as to form wrong judgments as to its nature, its extent, its turpitude and power. This delusion must be dispelled. The eyes must be opened to see sin as it is represented in the word of God, as an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, as extending not merely to overt acts or out-breaks of passion, but as deeply seated in the heart, polluting at the fountain the streams of life; as really deserving the punishment which God has denounced against it; and as having such hold upon the inward principles of our nature, that its power cannot be broken by any ordinary exertion.

This insight into the Scriptural account of sin is attended with a firm conviction of its truth; and

this conviction is inseparable from the kind of knowledge of which we are now speaking; because it is in fact nothing but an insight into the nature of the Scriptural doctrine as true, or as accordant with the moral nature which God has given us. Men therefore are not thus convinced either by argument or authority. They see and feel what God has declared concerning the nature and evil of sin to be true. Hence the conviction is irresistible even when most unwelcome. We often see it taking sudden and powerful possession of the soul, when conscience is roused from its torpor and assents to the declarations of God, with a force not to be resisted. When Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled. The truth, externally presented, found such a response in the bosom of the Roman governor that he could not disbelieve. This is in accordance with daily experience. The cavils of men against the unreasonable strictness of the divine law and their objections against the justice of its awful penalty vanish, in a moment, when their eyes are open to see what the law and its violation really are. And so long as the perception lasts, the conviction remains. If they can succeed in shutting out the light, and in quieting conscience roused by its intrusion, they become as skeptical as ever on all these subjects. In many cases they succeed in

closing their eyes on what they hate to see; and regain their former unbelief. But often this is found to be impossible, especially on the near approach of death, or when God is about to pluck them as brands from the burning. Probably a day does not pass without some illustration of the truth of these remarks. Men who have long lived in unbelief or carelessness are arrested by an influence which they can neither understand nor resist. There is no new revelation, no novel arguments, no conscious process of reasoning. There is simply a perception of the truth of the declarations of God concerning sin. Against the conviction thence rising, their old cavils, the arguments and assurances of their friends have no effect. They do not reach the point. They are addressed to something quite foreign to the ground of the conviction, and therefore do not affect it. Though this persuasion of the truth of the Scriptural doctrine respecting sin, is often temporary, it forms an essential part of those convictions which are abiding and saving. Men may have this persuasion who never accept the offers of salvation, but those who do accept them cannot be entirely without it.

This knowledge of sin, which enters so essentially into the nature of true conviction, is derived from the law, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. I had not known sin, said the apostle, but by

the law. For without the law, sin was dead. I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived and I died. It is clearly taught in these and similar passages, that the apostle was at one time ignorant of the extent and spirituality of the law, and consequently ignorant of sin. He thought himself to be as good as could be reasonably expected. He was contented and at ease. But when the law was revealed to him in its true character, his views of sin were at once changed. He came to know what it was, and to feel its power over him. A thousand things which before had appeared indifferent or trivial, he now saw to be aggravated offences; and especially the secret, deep-seated evil of his heart, which had escaped his knowledge or regard, was detected as the great source of all other sin.

The law is the means of communicating this knowledge, because it is an expression of the perfect holiness of God. So long as men judge themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, they will be in the dark as to their true character. It is not until they judge themselves by the perfect standard of duty contained in the law of God, that they can have any proper knowledge of their real character. It is in his light that we see light. It is only when we look away from the sinful beings by whom we are

surrounded, and feel ourselves in the presence of the perfect purity of God, that we are sensible of the extent of our departure from the standard of excellence. It is therefore both the doctrine of the Bible and the experience of the people of God, that the knowledge of sin arises from the apprehension of the divine excellence as revealed in the law.

There is no doubt great diversity in the experience of Christians as to the clearness of their views on this subject. In some cases every thing is seen as through a glass, darkly; in others there is such a discovery of the infinite excellence of God and of his law, as to fill the mind with the greatest reverence and self-abasement. Sometimes this knowledge steals upon the mind as imperceptibly as the opening day; at others, in a moment, the truth stands disclosed in all its awful purity. The man who one hour was unconcerned, the next is full of astonishment at his former blindness. He wonders how it was possible he could be so ignorant of the excellence of God and the perfection of his law. He is amazed at his infatuation in thinking that he was to be judged by the common standard of man's judgment, by the low demands of the world or of his associates. He now sees that the rule by which he is to be tried is infinitely pure and cannot overlook the least transgression. We are no where taught what degree of clearness of

this knowledge is necessary to salvation. We only know that men must have such a knowledge of sin as to bring their judgments respecting it into accordance with the declarations of God; that instead of that perpetual opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures respecting the evil and extent of sin, which men so generally evince, they must be brought to acquiesce in the truth and justice of all God's representations on the subject.

Besides this knowledge of sin and assent to the Scriptural doctrine on the subject, there is, in genuine conviction, a sense of personal unworthiness. This perhaps has been in a measure anticipated, but it deserves particular consideration. Holy beings may have a clear perception of the truth as presented in the word of God respecting the nature of sin, but they can have no sense of moral turpitude. And among men there is often a clear understanding of the doctrine on this subject, and a general assent to its truth, without any adequate conviction that what the Bible says of sinners is applicable to us. It is not enough therefore that we should know and believe what the Scriptures teach respecting sin, we must feel that it is all true as it regards ourselves. There must be an assent of our own consciousness to the declaration that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: that in us, that is, in our flesh, there

dwelleth no good thing. This sense of personal unworthiness is the principal part of conviction of sin. It is the opposite of that false notion of our own excellence, which we are so prone to indulge. It destroys our self-complacency and eradicates the disposition to justify ourselves, or extenuate our guilt.

The most certain concomitant of this sense of moral turpitude in the sight of God, is shame. O my God, cried Ezra under a sense of sin, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. And Daniel said: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face as at this day. I have heard of thee, said Job, with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. And in another place he says: Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. The same feeling is expressed by the Psalmist, when he says, Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore, my heart faileth me. The same emotion filled the bosom of the Publican, when he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast and said, God be merciful to me a sinner.

With this sense of unworthiness are mingled, in a greater or less degree, the feelings of contrition and remorse; sorrow for our innumerable offences, and bitter self-condemnation. To these are often added perplexity and fear of the wrath of God; a dread lest our sins never can be forgiven, lest our defilement never can be washed away. No suffering in this world can exceed what the soul often endures under the pressure of these feelings. It cries out with Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Or it is forced to say with Job, The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirits; and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. Or with David, While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

With the inspired record of the experience of God's people on this subject, we find the language of his more eminent servants in later times remarkably coincident. The confessions of Augustin are full of similar expressions of humiliation and anguish under a sense of sin. And even the stout heart of Luther was so broken by his inward sufferings, that his life was long a burden almost too heavy for him to bear. But while it is no doubt true that it is the natural tendency of correct apprehensions of our real character in the sight of God to

produce these strong emotions of humiliation and sorrow; and while it is no less true that those who have made the most eminent attainments in holiness, have generally had the largest share of these inward trials, it is not to be supposed that they are necessary to the character of a Christian. On the contrary a believing apprehension of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, while it would not prevent humiliation and penitential sorrow on account of sin, would effectually extract the bitterness of remorse and fear from the cup of repentance. There is no true religion in these terrors and fearful apprehensions. The death bed of the impenitent often exhibits this sense of guilt, humiliation, remorse, dread of punishment and other indications of an enlightened and awakened conscience. And in many cases those who have suffered all this distress, lose their serious impressions and sink into their former carelessness. Though, therefore, the pain of remorse and dread of the wrath of God often attend conviction of sin, they do not constitute it In many cases there is little of this agitation of feeling. Perhaps the most frequent form of religious experience on this subject is a deep distress on account of the want of an excitement of feeling corresponding with the judgment of the understanding and conscience. The common complaint with many is that they cannot feel; that their hearts

are like ice; that the knowledge and perception of their ingratitude and disobedience produce little or no emotion. Such persons would gladly exchange their insensibility for the keenest anguish; their constant prayer is that God would take from them their heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. This form of experience is just as consistent with the nature of conviction of sin as the other. All that is necessary is the testimony of conscience to the justice of the divine representations of our character and conduct; the consciousness and acknowledgment that we are what God declares us to be. Where this judgment of the conscience, or this sense of personal unworthiness exists, leading the sinner to lay his hand upon his mouth in the presence of God, and to bow at his feet as undeserving of mercy, there, as far as this point is concerned, is genuine conviction.

This state of mind may be produced in very different ways. Sometimes it is the result of a calm review of life and a comparison of the habitual state of the heart and general course of our conduct with the law of God. Sometimes, some one offence more than commonly aggravated seizes upon the conscience; some broken vow, some neglected call, some open sin, is made the means of revealing the man to himself. Whatever may be the particular occasion, the mind is led to fix itself on its respon-

sibility to God and the conviction of its guilt becomes settled and confirmed. This is necessary to the sinner's return to God So long as he thinks himself whole, he will not apply to the physician So long as he regards his sins as either few or trivial, he will feel no concern for pardon or sanctification. But when his eyes are opened and his conscience aroused, he feels that his case demands immediate and earnest attention; he knows himself to be unprepared to meet his God, that his sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven, unless he obtains an interest in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Every true Christian is in some way brought to this conviction and acknowledgment of personal ill-desert in the sight of God.

In the third place, conviction of sin includes a conviction of our condemnation before God. A sense of sin is a sense of unworthiness and a sense of unworthiness involves a sense of just exposure to the divine displeasure. It may be proper to notice three very distinct states of mind in reference to this subject. It is very obvious that our views of the punishment due to sin, must depend upon our views of sin itself. If we have inadequate apprehensions of the evil of sin, we shall have inadequate apprehensions of the punishment which it deserves. Hence in the great majority of men there is a secret disbelief of the Scriptural repre-

sentations on this subject. They cannot reconcile the declarations of God respecting the doom of the impenitent with their views of his justice and mercy and, therefore, they cannot believe them. And it very often happens that the sense of sin which serious people experience is insufficient to overcome this unbelief, or at least, the strong opposition of the heart to what the Bible teaches on this subject. They feel that they are sinners, they feel that they deserve the displeasure of God, but they still experience a secret revolting against the dreadful denunciations of the Scriptures against all sin. "To submit to the condemning power of the holy law of God," says Dr. Milner, "is a hard matter, a very hard matter indeed to do this thoroughly. My understanding has shown me, for many years, that this was the touchstone of a sound conversion; and I have been busy enough in noting the defect of it in others; but as to myself, if I have got on at all in this respect, it is very lately indeed. The heart is sadly deceitful here; for, with Christ's salvation before one's eye, one may easily fancy that God is just and equitable in condemning sinners; when if you put the case, only for a moment, to your own heart seriously, as a thing likely to happen, the heart will rise against such a dispensation; perhaps indeed with a smothered sort of opposition and dislike, but which is very steady and

determined. Nothing less than the Holy Ghost himself can cure this, by showing us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* That the soul should revolt at the idea of its own misery, is the law of our nature, and never can be eradicated. This is not the sentiment which it is intended to condemn, but the opposition of the heart to the truth and justice of God's declarations respecting the punishment due to sin. It is this opposition, this disposition to criminate God, to regard him as unjustly severe, which ought to be subdued; because it shows that our hearts are not in harmony with his word; that we regard as unjust what he pronounces just. All experience shows that this is a very common state of mind. And its existence proves that our views of the ill-desert of sin have not been sufficiently clear to bring us to submit to the plan which God has revealed for our redemption from deserved condemnation.

The opposite extreme to this is the feeling that our sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven. This is no uncommon persuasion. When there is a clear discovery of the evil of sin, with no concomitant apprehension of the true plan of salvation, despair is the natural result. The judgment of conscience is known to be true when it pronounces

* Wilberforce's Correspondence.

our sins to be deserving of death. And unless the soul sees how God can be just and yet justify the sinner, it cannot hope for mercy. Nothing can be more pitiable than a soul in this condition. Its views of the justice of God and of the evil of sin, are neither false nor exaggerated. It is their truth which gives them power, and which renders futile the soothing assurances of friends that God will not be so strict in marking iniquity, or that the sinner's guilt is not so great as he imagines. An enlightened conscience cannot be thus appeased, and if such be the only sources of consolation to which it has access, it must despair.

In a Christian country, however, the knowledge of the plan of salvation is so generally diffused, that it seldom fails, even when imperfectly understood, to calm or restrain the apprehensions of God's displeasure. It is known that God can pardon sin, that there is salvation at least for some, for some have been saved. And although the sinner is often disposed to think that his is an excepted case, or that there is some peculiar aggravation in his guilt, which puts him beyond the reach of mercy, yet he cannot be sure that this is the case. And in his darkest hours the belief in the possibility of salvation is not entirely destroyed.

Between these extremes of inimical opposition to the truth of God as to the just exposure of the

sinner to condemnation and the despair of mercy which arises from unbelief, lies genuine conviction of ill-desert. If religious experience is the conformity of our judgments and feelings to the truths that are revealed in the Scriptures and if it is there revealed that the wages of sin is death, our judgment and feeling must assent to that truth; we must admit that such is the just desert of sin and of our sins. There must be no disposition to complain of the extent or severity of the law; but such a sense of ill-desert in the sight of God as shall lead us to lie at his feet, sensible that he can neither do nor threaten wrong and that forgiveness must be a matter entirely of grace. It is obvious that there can be no intelligent acceptance of Christ as a saviour without this conviction of our exposure to condemnation and there can be no conviction of such exposure, without a perception of the justice of the penalty of the law. It is, however, to be remembered that there are many things involved in Christian experience, which may not be the object of distinct attention. It may, therefore, well happen that many pass from death unto life, without any lively apprehension of the wrath of God, or any very distinct impression that all that he has threatened against sin might be justly inflicted upon them. Their attention may have been arrested and their hearts moved by the exhibition of

the love of God in Christ. and they may have been conscious, at the time, of little more than a cordial acquiescence in the gospel, and the desire and purpose to live for the service of God. Still, even in such persons, as soon as their attention is directed to the subject, there is a full recognition of ill-desert, a readiness to acknowledge that salvation is a matter of grace, and that they would have no right to complain had they been left to perish in their sins. Diversified, therefore, as may be the experience of God's people on this subject, they agree in acknowledging the justice of God in his demands and his threatenings and in regarding themselves as unworthy of the least of all his favours.

SECTION II. *Insufficiency of our own righteousness and of our own strength.*

Another essential characteristic of genuine conviction is the persuasion that our own good works are entirely insufficient to recommend us to God, or to be the ground of our acceptance before him. Since the Scriptures declare that we are justified freely, not by works, lest any man should boast, but by faith in Jesus Christ, our experience must accord with this declaration. We must have such views of the holiness of God, of the extent of his

law and of our own unworthiness as shall make us fully sensible that we cannot by our own works secure either pardon or acceptance. It is easy to profess that we do not trust to our own righteousness, but really to divest ourselves of all reliance upon our supposed excellence, is a difficult task. When a man is roused to a sense of his guilt and danger, his first impulse is almost always to fly to any other refuge than that provided in the gospel. The most natural method of appeasing conscience is the promise of reformation. Particular sins are therefore forsaken, and a struggle, it may be, is maintained against all others. This conflict is often long and painful, but it is always unsuccessful. It is soon found that sin, in one form or other, is constantly getting the mastery, and the soul feels that something more must be done if it is ever to make itself fit for heaven. It is, therefore, ready to do. or to submit to any thing which appears necessary for this purpose. What particular form of works it may be which it endeavours to weave into a robe of righteousness, depends on the degree of knowledge which it possesses, or the kind of religious instruction which it receives. When greatly ignorant of the gospel, it endeavours by painful penances, self-imposed, or prescribed by priestly authority, to make satisfaction for its sins. Experience teaches that there is no extremity of self-denial to

which a conscience-stricken man will not gladly submit as a means of satisfying the demands of God. If heaven were really to be gained by such means, we should see the road crowded by the young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and ignorant, in multitudes as countless as those which throng the cruel temples of the Hindoos, or which perish on the burning sands of Arabia. This is the easiest, the pleasantest, the most congenial of all the methods of salvation, taught by the cunning craftiness of men. It is no wonder that those who teach it as the doctrine of the gospel, should find submissive hearers. If men can be allowed to purchase heaven, or make atonement for past transgressions, by present suffering, they will gladly undertake it. This is so congenial to the human heart, that men who are well informed, and who pride themselves on their independence of mind, are scarcely less apt to be caught in the meshes of this net, than their more ignorant brethren. We see, therefore, statesmen and philosophers, as well as peasants, wearing sackcloth, or walking barefoot, at the bidding of their religious teachers.

In Protestant countries, where the Bible is generally accessible, it is rare to see any such gross exhibitions of the spirit of self-righteousness. The Scriptures so clearly teach the method of salvation, that almost every one knows that at least mere

external works of morality or discipline cannot avail to our justification before God. We must have a finer robe, a robe composed of duties of a higher value. Prayers are multiplied, the house of God is frequented, the whole routine of religious duties is assiduously attended to, under the impression that thus we shall satisfy the demands of God and secure his favour. Multitudes are contented with this routine. Their apprehensions of the character and requirements of God, of the evil of sin, and of their own ill-desert are so low, that this remedy is adequate for all the wounds their consciences feel. The performance of their social and religious duties seems sufficient, in their view, to entitle them to the character of religious men; and they are satisfied. Thus it was with Paul, who considered himself, as touching the righteousness which is of the law to be blameless. But all his strictness of moral duty and religious observance, was discovered to be worthless, so far as satisfying the demands of God is concerned. And every man, who is brought to accept the offer of salvation as presented in the gospel, is made to feel that it is not for any thing which he either does or abstains from doing, that his sins are pardoned and his person accepted before God. Nay, he sees that what men call their good works are so impure, as to be themselves a ground of condemnation. What

are cold, wandering, selfish, irreverent prayers, but offences against God, whom we pretend to propitiate, by services which are but a mockery of his holiness? And what is any routine of heartless observances, or if not heartless, at least so imperfect as to fail of securing even our own approbation, in the eyes of him before whom the heavens are unclean? What approach can such services make either towards satisfying the present demands of God, or atoning for years of neglect and sin? It requires but little insight into the state of his own heart, or the real character of the divine law, to convince the sinner that he must have a better righteousness than that which consists of his own duties or observances.

From this foundation of sand the convinced sinner is, therefore, soon driven, but he betakes himself to another refuge nearer the cross, as he supposes, and which seems to require more self-renunciation. He ceases to think of establishing his own righteousness, but he still wishes to be made worthy to receive the righteousness of God. He knows that he can never cancel his debt of guilt, that his best services are unworthy of acceptance, that with all his circumspection he never lives a day in full compliance with the just demands of the law, and consequently that his salvation must be of grace, but he still thinks he must in some way

merit that grace, or at least, be prepared by some observance or some experience for its reception. The distressed soul imagines that if it could be more distressed, more humbled, more touched with sorrow or remorse, it might then find acceptance. It sees that its long course of disobedience and ingratitude, its rejection of Christ, its disregard of mercies and warnings, its thousand sins of commission and omission, if forgiven at all, must be gratuitously pardoned, but this hardness of heart, this want of due tenderness and penitence, is a sin which must first be got out of the way, before the others can be remitted. It is, however, only one of the long, black catalogue. It can no more be separately conquered or atoned for, before coming to Christ, than any other sin of heart or life. It is often long before the soul is brought to see this, or to feel that it is really endeavouring to make itself better before applying to the physician; to accomplish at least some preparatory part of salvation for itself, so as not to be entirely indebted to the Redeemer. At last, however, the soul discovers its mistake; it finds that Christ does not save sinners for their tenderness or conviction, that tears are not more worthy of acceptance, than fasting, or almsgiving; that it is the unworthy, the hard-hearted, the ungodly, those who have nothing to recommend them, that Christ came to save, and whom he ac-

cepts in order to render them contrite and tender-hearted and obedient. These graces are his gifts, and if we stay away from him until we get them ourselves, we must perish in our sins. To this entire self-renunciation, this absolute rejection of every thing in itself as the ground, or reason of its acceptance, must the soul be brought before it embraces the offers of the gospel.

It is included in what has been said that a consciousness of our own weakness is a necessary ingredient, or consequence of true conviction. There is not only a giving up of our own righteousness, but of our own strength. All that is necessary here as on other points, is that we should feel what is true. If it is the doctrine of the Bible that the sinner can change his own heart, subdue his sins, excite all right affections in his heart, then genuine religious experience requires that this truth should be known, not merely as a matter of speculation, but as a matter of consciousness. But if the Scriptures teach that this change of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit; that we are born not of the will of man but of God; that it is the exceeding greatness of the divine power that operates in them that believe, quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins, creating them anew in Christ Jesus, so that they are his workmanship, created unto good works; if from one end of the Scriptures

to the other the internal work of salvation is declared to be not by the might, or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord, then is this one of the great truths of revelation of which we must be convinced. Our experience must accord with this representation and we must feel that to be true in our case, which God declares to be true universally.

When a man is brought to feel that he is a sinner that his heart is far from being right in the sight of God, he as naturally turns to his own strength to effect a change and to bring himself up to the standard of the law, as he turns to his own works as a compensation for his sins, or as a ground of confidence towards God. His efforts, therefore, are directed to subdue the power of sin, and to excite religious feelings in his heart. He endeavours to mortify pride, to subdue the influence of the body, to wean himself from the world. He gives up his sinful, or worldly associates; he strengthens his purposes against evil; he forces himself to discharge the most ungrateful duties and exercises himself in self-denial. At the same time he tries to force himself into a right state of mind, to make himself believe, repent, love and exercise all the Christian graces of meekness, humility, brotherly kindness and charity; that is, he tries to make himself religious. He does every thing in his own strength

and to save himself. Sometimes this course is pursued to the end of life. At others, it is continued for years and then found to be all in vain. Wesley tells us this was the kind of religion which he had, until his visit to America and his intercourse with the Moravians. This is the religion of ascetics, which may be persevered in, through stress of conscience, or fear of perdition, with great strictness and constancy. Almost every man makes trial of it. He will be his own saviour, if he can. It is found, however, by those who are taught of God, to be a hopeless task. The subtle evil of the heart is not to be subdued by any such efforts. If we force ourselves to forego the pleasures of sin, we cannot destroy the desire of forbidden joys. If we refuse to gratify pride, we cannot prevent its aspirations. If we relinquish the pursuit of worldly things, we still retain the love of the world. If we force ourselves to perform religious duties, we cannot make those duties a delight. If we compel ourselves to think of God, we cannot force ourselves to love him, to desire communion with him, to take pleasure in his service, and to delight in all his requirements. No one can tell the misery arising from these painful and ineffectual struggles; these vain attempts to subdue sin and excite the Christian graces. If any thing could be taken as a substitute for them; if making many prayers, or submitting

to any suffering, could be taken as an equivalent, it would be gladly acceded to. But to change the heart, to delight in God, to be really spiritual and holy, is a work the sinner finds to be above his strength and yet absolutely necessary. Repeated failures do not destroy his delusion; he still thinks that this is his work and that he must do it, or be lost. He, therefore, struggles on, he collects all his strength, and at length suddenly discovers it to be perfect weakness. He finds that if he is ever renewed and made holy, it must be the work of God and he cries in the depth of his distress, Lord save me, or I perish. He gives up working in his own strength and sees, what he wonders he never saw before, that the Christian virtues are really graces, i. e. gifts; that they are not excellencies to be wrought out by ourselves; but favours bestowed through Christ and for Christ's sake; that it is the Holy Spirit purchased and sent by Him that is to change the heart and convince of sin, righteousness and judgment; that faith, repentance, joy, peace, humility and meekness are the fruits of that Spirit, and not the products of our own evil hearts; that if we could make ourselves holy we should scarcely need a Saviour; and that it is the greatest of all delusions to suppose that we must be holy before we come to God through Christ, instead of holiness being the result of our reconciliation

While we are under the law, we bring forth fruit unto death. It is not until we are free from the law and reconciled to God by the death of his Son, that we bring forth fruit unto righteousness. This great truth, though written on every page of the Bible, every man has to learn for himself. He cannot be made to understand it by reading it in the Scriptures, or by being told it by others. He must try his own strength until he finds it to be nothing before he submits to be saved by the grace of God, and bowing at the feet of Jesus, in utter despair of any other helper, says, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

The man, therefore, whom the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, he causes to understand and believe what God has revealed on this subject. He makes him feel that what He declares to be true of all men, is true of him; that he deserves what God declares all men deserve; that he has no merit to recommend him to God and no strength to change his own heart. This knowledge the Spirit communicates through the law, which by presenting the perfect rule of duty, shows us how far short we come of the glory of God, and how often and justly we have incurred its penalty; which convinces us that we are entirely unable to comply with its righteous demands, and that no mere objective presentation of what is holy, just and good

can change the heart, or destroy the power of indwelling sin; since even when we see the excellence of the law we do not conform to it and cannot do the things that we would, but ever find a law in our members warring against the law of our minds and bringing us into subjection to the law of sin. It is thus that the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; to drive us from every refuge of our own righteousness and strength, to Him who is made of God, unto those that believe, both justification and sanctification.

CHAPTER V.

JUSTIFICATION.

SECTION I. *Importance of the doctrine. Explanation of the Scriptural terms relating to it. Justification is not by works.*

THE state of mind described in the preceding chapter, cannot be long endured. Some way of satisfying the demands of conscience must be adopted. When the mind is enlightened by divine truth and duly impressed with a sense of guilt, it cannot fail anxiously to enquire, How can a man be just with God? The answer given to this question decides the character of our religion, and if practically adopted, our future destiny. To give a wrong answer, is to mistake the way to heaven. It is to err where error is fatal, because it cannot be corrected. If God require one thing and we present another, how can we be saved? If he has revealed a method in which he can be just and yet justify the sinner, and if we reject that method and insist upon

pursuing a different way, how can we hope to be accepted? The answer, therefore, which is given to the above question should be seriously pondered by all who assume the office of religious teachers, and by all who rely upon their instructions. As we are not to be judged by proxy, but every man must answer for himself, so every man should be satisfied for himself what the Bible teaches on this subject. All that religious teachers can do, is to endeavour to aid the investigations of those who are anxious to learn the way of life. And in doing this, the safest method is to adhere strictly to the instructions of the Scriptures, and exhibit the subject as it is there presented. The substance and the form of this all-important doctrine are so intimately connected, that those who attempt to separate them, can hardly fail to err. What one discards as belonging merely to the form, another considers as belonging to its substance. All certainty and security are lost, as soon as this method is adopted, and it becomes a matter to be decided exclusively by our own views of right and wrong, what is to be retained and what rejected from the Scriptural representations. Our only security, therefore, is to take the language of the Bible in its obvious meaning, and put upon it the construction which the persons to whom it was addressed must have given

and which, consequently, the sacred writers intended it should bear.

As the doctrine of justification is not only frequently stated in the sacred Scriptures, but formally taught and vindicated, all that will be attempted in this chapter, is to give, as faithfully as possible, a representation of what the inspired writers inculcate on this subject; that is, to state what positions they assume, by what arguments they sustain those positions, how they answer the objections to their doctrine and what application they make of it to the hearts and consciences of their readers.

It is one of the primary doctrines of the Bible, everywhere either asserted or assumed, that we are under the law of God. This is true of all classes of men, whether they enjoy a divine revelation or not. Every thing which God has revealed as a rule of duty enters into the constitution of the law which binds those to whom that revelation is given, and by which they are to be ultimately judged. Those who have not received any external revelation of the divine will, are a law unto themselves The knowledge of right and wrong, written upon their hearts, is of the nature of a divine law, having its authority and sanction, and by it the heathen are to be judged in the last day.

God has seen fit to annex the promise of life to obedience to his law. The man that doeth these

things shall live by them,* is the language of Scripture on this subject. To the lawyer who admitted that the law required love to God and man, our Saviour said, Thou hast answered right. This do, and thou shalt live.† And to one who asked him, What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? he said, If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.‡ On the other hand, the law denounces death as the penalty of transgression. The wages of sin is death. Such is the uniform declaration of Scripture on this subject.

The obedience which the law demands, is called righteousness; and those who render that obedience are called righteous. To ascribe righteousness to any one, or to pronounce him righteous, is the scriptural meaning of the word to justify. The word never means to make good in a moral sense, but always to pronounce just or righteous. Thus God says, I will not justify the wicked.§ Judges are commanded to justify the righteous and to condemn the wicked.‖ Wo is pronounced on those who justify the wicked for a reward.¶ In the New Testament it is said, By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.** It is God who

* Rom. x. 5. † Luke x. 28. ‡ Matt. xix. 17
§ Ex. xxiii. 7. ‖ Deut. xxv. 1. ¶ Is. v. 23.
** Rom iii. 20.

justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* There is scarcely a word in the Bible the meaning of which is less open to doubt. There is no passage in the New Testament in which it is used out of its ordinary and obvious sense.† When God justifies a man, he declares him to be righteous. To justify never means to render one holy. It is said to be sinful to justify the wicked; but it could never be sinful to render the wicked holy. And as the law demands righteousness, to impute or ascribe righteousness to any one, is in scriptural language to justify. To make (or constitute) righteous, is another equivalent form of expression. Hence to be righteous before God, and to be justified, mean the same thing; as in the following passage, Not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.‡ The attentive, and especially the anxious reader of the Bible cannot fail to observe that these various expressions, to be righteous in the sight of God, to impute righteousness, to constitute righteous, to justify, and others of similar import, are so interchanged as to explain each other, and to make it

* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

† Revelation xxii. 11, is probably no exception to this remark, as the text in that passage is uncertain.

‡ Rom. ii. 13.

clear that to justify a man is to ascribe or impute to him righteousness. The great question then is How is this righteousness to be obtained? We have reason to be thankful that the answer which the Bible gives to this question is so perfectly plain.

In the first place, that the righteousness by which we are to be justified before God is not of works, is not only asserted but proved. The apostle's first argument on this point is derived from the consideration that the law demands a perfect righteousness. If the law was satisfied by an imperfect obedience, or by a routine of external duties, or by any service which men are competent to render, then indeed justification would be by works. But since it demands perfect obedience, justification by works is, for sinners, absolutely impossible. It is thus the apostle reasons.* As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. As the law pronounces its curse upon every man who continues not to do all that it commands, and as no man can pretend to this perfect obedience, it follows that all who look to the law for justification must be condemned. To the same effect in the follow-

* Gal. iii. 10.

ing verse, he says, The law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live by them. That is, the law is not satisfied by any single grace or imperfect obedience. It knows and can know no other ground of justification than complete compliance with its demands. Hence in the same chapter, Paul says, If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law. Could the law pronounce righteous, and thus give a title to the promised life to those who had broken its commands, there would have been no necessity of any other provision for the salvation of men; but as the law cannot thus lower its demands, justification by the law is impossible. The same truth is taught in a different form, when it is said. If righteousness *come* by the law, Christ is dead in vain.* There would have been no necessity for the death of Christ, if it had been possible to satisfy the law by the imperfect obedience which we can render. Paul therefore warns all those who look to works for justification that they are debtors to do the whole law.† It knows no compromise; it cannot demand less than what is right, and perfect obedience is right, and therefore its only language is as before, Cursed is every one that continueth not in

* Gal. ii. 21 † Ibid v. 3

all things written in the book of the law to do them; and, The man that doeth those things shall live by them. Every man, therefore, who expects justification by works, must see to it, not that he is better than other men, or that he is very exact and does many things, or that he fasts twice in the week, and gives tithes of all he possesses, but that he is SINLESS.

That the law of God is thus strict in its demands is a truth which lies at the foundation of all Paul's reasoning in reference to the method of justification. He proves that the Gentiles have sinned against the law written on their hearts; and that the Jews have broken the law revealed in their Scriptures; both Jews and Gentiles therefore are under sin, and the whole world is guilty before God. Hence he infers that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. There is, however, no force in this reasoning, except on the assumption that the law demands perfect obedience. How many men, who freely acknowledge that they are sinners, depend upon their works for acceptance with God! They see no inconsistency between the acknowledgment of sin, and the expectation of justification by works. The reason is, they proceed upon a very different principle from that adopted by the apostle. They suppose that the law may be satisfied by very im

perfect obedience. Paul assumes that God demands perfect conformity to his will, that his wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. With him therefore it is enough that men have sinned, to prove that they cannot be justified by works. It is not a question of degrees, more or less, for as to this point there is no difference, since all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

This doctrine, though so plainly taught in scripture, men are disposed to think very severe. They imagine that their good deeds will be compared with their evil deeds, and that they will be rewarded or punished as the one class or the other preponderates; or that the sins of one part of life may be atoned for by the good works of another; or that they can escape by mere confession and repentance. They could not entertain such expectations, if they believed themselves to be under a law. No human law is administered as men seem to hope the law of God will be. He who steals or murders, though it be but once, though he confesses and repents, though he does any number of acts of charity, is not less a thief or murderer. The law cannot take cognizance of his repentance and reformation. If he steals or murders the law condemns him Justification by the law is for him impossible. The law of God extends to the mos

secret exercises of the heart. It condemns what ever is in its nature evil. If a man violate this perfect rule of right, there is an end of justification by the law; he has failed to comply with its conditions; and the law can only condemn him. To justify him, would be to say that he had not transgressed. Men however think that they are not to be dealt with on the principles of strict law. Here is their fatal mistake. It is here that they are in most direct conflict with the Scriptures, which proceed upon the uniform assumption of our subjection to the law. Under the government of God, strict law is nothing but perfect excellence; it is the steady exercise of moral rectitude. Even conscience, when duly enlightened and roused, is as strict as the law of God. It refuses to be appeased by repentance, reformation, or penance. It enforces every command and every denunciation of our Supreme Ruler, and teaches, as plainly as do the Scriptures themselves, that justification by an imperfect obedience is impossible. As conscience however is fallible, no reliance on this subject is placed on her testimony. The appeal is to the word of God; which clearly teaches that it is impossible a sinner can be justified by works, because the law demands perfect obedience.

The apostle's second argument to show that justification is not by works, is the testimony of

the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This testimony is urged in various forms. In the first place, as the apostle proceeds upon the principle that the law demands perfect obedience, all those passages which assert the universal sinfulness of men, are so many declarations that they cannot be justified by works. He therefore quotes such passages as the following: There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.* The Old Testament, by teaching that all men are sinners, does, in the apostle's view, thereby teach that they can never be accepted before God on the ground of their own righteousness. To say that a man is a sinner, is to say that the law condemns him; and of course it cannot justify him. As the ancient Scriptures are full of declarations of the sinfulness of men, so they are full of proof that justification is not by works.

But in the second place, Paul cites their direct affirmative testimony in support of his doctrine. In the Psalms it is said, Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.† This passage he often quotes; and

* Rom. iii. 10, 12. † Ps. cxliii. 2.

to the same class belong all those passages which speak of the insufficiency or worthlessness of human righteousness in the sight of God.

In the third place, the apostle refers to those passages which imply the doctrine for which he contends; that is, to those which speak of the acceptance of men with God as a matter of grace, as something which they do not deserve, and for which they can urge no claim founded upon their own merit. It is with this view that he refers to the language of David; Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. The fact that a man is forgiven implies that he is guilty; and the fact that he is guilty, implies that his justification cannot rest upon his own character or conduct. It need hardly be remarked, that in this view, the whole Scriptures, from beginning to the end, are crowded with condemnations of the doctrine of justification by works. Every penitent confession, every appeal to God's mercy, is a renunciation of all personal merit, a declaration that the penitent's hope was not founded on any thing in himself. Such confessions and appeals are indeed often made by those who still rely upon their good works, or inherent

* Rom. iv. 7, 8.

righteousness, for acceptance with God. This, however, does not invalidate the apostle's argument. It only shows that such persons have a different view of what is necessary for justification, from that entertained by the apostle. They suppose that the demands of the law are so low, that although they are sinners and need to be forgiven, they can still do what the law demands. Whereas, Paul proceeds on the assumption that the law requires perfect obedience, and therefore every confession of sin, or appeal for mercy, involves a renunciation of justification by the law.

Again, the apostle represents the Old Testament as teaching that justification is not by works, by showing that they inculcate a different method of obtaining acceptance with God. This they do by the doctrine which they teach concerning the Messiah as a Redeemer from sin. Hence Paul says that the method of justification without works, (not founded upon works) was testified by the law and the prophets, that is, by the whole of the Old Testament. The two methods of acceptance with God, the one by works the other by a propitiation for sin, are incompatible. And as the ancient Scriptures teach the latter method, they repudiate the former. But they moreover, in express terms, assert, That the just shall live by faith. And the law knows nothing of faith; its language is, The man tha

doeth them shall live by them.* The law knows nothing of any thing but obedience as the ground of acceptance. If the Scriptures say we are accepted through faith, they thereby say that we are not accepted on the ground of obedience.

Again, the examples of justification given in the Old Testament, show that it was not by works. The apostle appeals particularly to the case of Abraham, and asks, Whether he attained justification by works? and answers, No, for if he were justified by works he had whereof to glory, but he had no ground of glorying before God, and, therefore, he was not justified by works. And the Scriptures expressly assert, Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness. His acceptance, therefore, was by faith and not by works.

In all these various ways, does the apostle make the authority of the Old Testament sustain his doctrine that justification is not by works. This authority is as decisive for us as it was for the ancient Jewish Christians. We also believe the Old Testament to be the word of God, and its truths come to us explained and enforced by Christ and his apostles. We have the great advantage of an infallible interpretation of these early oracles of truth, and the argumentative manner in which their

* Gal iii. 11, 12.

authority is cited and applied prevents all obscurity as to the real intentions of the sacred writers. That by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified before God, is taught so clearly and so frequently in the New Testament, it is so often asserted, so formally proved, so variously assumed, that no one can doubt that such is indeed the doctrine of the word of God. The only point on which the serious inquirer can even raise a question, is what kind of works do the Scriptures mean to exclude as the foundation for acceptance with God. Does the apostle mean works in the widest sense, or does he merely intend ceremonial observances, or works of mere formality performed without any real love to God?

Those who attend to the nature of his assertions and to the course of his argument, will find that there is no room for doubt on this subject. The primary principle on which his argument rests precludes all ground for mistaking his meaning. He assumes that the law demands perfect obedience, and as no man can render that obedience, he infers that no man can be justified by the law. He does not argue that because the law is spiritual it cannot be satisfied by mere ceremonies or by works flowing from an impure motive. He no where says, that though we cannot be justified by external rites, or by works having the mere form of goodness, we are justified by our sincere though imperfect obe-

dience On the contrary he constantly teaches, that since we are sinners and since the law condemns all sin, it condemns us, and justification by the law is, therefore, impossible. This argument he applies to the Jews and the Gentiles without distinction, to the whole world, whether they knew any thing of the Jewish Scriptures or not. It was the moral law, the law which he pronounced holy, just and good, which says, Thou shalt not covet; it is this law, however revealed, whether in the writings of Moses, or in the human heart, of which he constantly asserts that it cannot give life, or teach the way of acceptance with God. As most of those to whom he wrote had enjoyed a divine revelation, and as that revelation included the law of Moses and all its rites, he of course included that law in his statement and often specially refers to it; but never in its limited sense as a code of religious ceremonies, but always in its widest scope as including the highest rule of moral duty made known to men. And hence he never contrasts one class of works with another, but constantly works and faith, excluding all classes of the former, works of righteousness as well as those of mere formality Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us.*

* Titus iii. 5

Who hath saved us not according to our works.* We are saved by faith, not by works.† Nay, men are said to be justified without works; to be in themselves ungodly when justified; and it is not until they are justified that they perform any really good works. It is only when united to Christ that we bring forth fruit unto God. Hence we are said to be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. All the inward excellence of the Christian and the fruits of the spirit are the consequences and not the causes of his reconciliation and acceptance with God. They are the robe of beauty, the white garment, with which Christ arrays those who come to him poor and blind and naked. It is then the plain doctrine of the word of God that our justification is not founded upon our own obedience to the law. Nothing done by us or wrought in us can for a moment stand the test of a rule of righteousness which pronounces a curse upon all those, who continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.

SECTION II. *The demands of the Law are satisfied by what Christ has done.*

We have thus seen that the Scriptures teach first that all men are naturally under the law as pre

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Eph. ii. 9.

scribing the terms of their acceptance with God and secondly, that no obedience which sinners can render is sufficient to satisfy the demands of that law. It follows then that unless we are freed from the law, not as a rule of duty, but as prescribing the conditions of acceptance with God, justification is for us impossible. It is, therefore, the third great point of Scriptural doctrine on this subject, that believers are free from the law in the sense just stated. Ye are not under the law, says the apostle, but under grace.* To illustrate this declaration he refers to the case of a woman who is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but when he is dead, she is free from her obligation to him, and is at liberty to marry another man. So we are delivered from the law as a rule of justification, and are at liberty to embrace a different method of obtaining acceptance with God.† Paul says of himself,‡ that he had died to the law, i. e. become free from it. And the same is said of all believers.§ He insists upon this freedom as essential not only to justification but to sanctification. For while under the law, the motions of sin, which were by the law, brought forth fruit unto death, but now we are delivered from the law that we may serve God in

* Rom. vi. 14.
† Rom. vii. 1, 6.
‡ Gal ii. 19.
§ Rom. vii. 6

newness of spirit.* Before faith came we were kept under the law, which he compares to a schoolmaster, but now we are no longer under a schoolmaster.† He regards the desire to be subject to the law as the greatest infatuation. Tell me, he says ye that desire to be under the law, Do ye not hear the law? and then shows that those who are under the demands of a legal system, are in the condition of slaves and not of sons and heirs. Stand fast, therefore, he exhorts, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify to every one that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.‡ This infatuation Paul considered madness, and exclaims, O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?§ This apostasy was so fatal, the substitution of legal obedience for the work of Christ as the ground of justification, was so destructive, that Paul

* Rom vii. 5, 6.
† Gal. iii. 24, 25.
‡ Gal. v. 1, 4
§ Gal. iii. 1, 2.

pronounces accursed any man or angel who should preach such a doctrine for the gospel of the grace of God.

It was to the law, as revealed in the books of Moses, that the fickle Galatians were disposed to look for justification. Their apostasy, however, consisted in going back to the law, no matter in what form revealed, to works, no matter of what kind, as the ground of justification. The apostle's arguments and denunciations, therefore, are so framed as to apply to the adoption of any form of legal obedience, instead of the work of Christ, as the ground of our confidence towards God. To suppose that all he says relates exclusively to a relapse into Judaism, is to suppose that we Gentiles have no part in the redemption of Christ. If it was only from the bondage of the Jewish economy that he redeemed his people, then those who were never subject to that bondage have no interest in his work. And of course Paul was strangely infatuated in preaching Christ crucified to the Gentiles. We find, however, that what he taught in the Epistle to the Galatians, in special reference to the law of Moses, he teaches in the Epistle to the Romans in reference to that law which is holy, just and good, and which condemns the most secret sins of the heart.

The nature of the apostle's doctrine is, if possi-

ble, even more clear from the manner in which he vindicates it, than from his direct assertions. What then! he asks, shall we continue in sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Had Paul taught that we are freed from the ceremonial, in order to be subject to the moral law, there could have been no room for such an objection. But if he taught that the moral law itself could not give life, that we must be freed from its demands as the condition of acceptance with God, then indeed, to the wise of this world, it might seem that he was loosing the bands of moral obligation, and opening the door to the greatest licentiousness. Hence the frequency and earnestness with which he repels the objection, and shows that so far from legal bondage being necessary to holiness, it must cease before holiness can exist that it is not until the curse of the law is removed, and the soul reconciled to God, that holy affections rise in the heart, and the fruits of holiness appear in the life. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

It is then clearly the doctrine of the Bible that believers are freed from the law as prescribing the conditions of their acceptance with God; it is no

* Rom. iii. 31.

longer incumbent upon them, in order to justification, to fulfil its demand of perfect obedience, or to satisfy its penal exactions. But how is this deliverance effected? How is it that rational and accountable beings are exempted from the obligations of that holy and just law, which was originally imposed upon their race as the rule of justification? The answer to this question includes the fourth great truth respecting the way of salvation taught in the Scriptures. It is not by the abrogation of the law, either as to its precepts or penalty; it is not by lowering its demands, and accommodating them to the altered capacities or inclinations of men. We have seen how constantly the apostle teaches that the law still demands perfect obedience, and that they are debtors to do the whole law who seek justification at its hands. He no less clearly teaches that death is as much the wages of sin in our case, as it was in that of Adam. If it is neither by abrogation nor relaxation that we are freed from the demands of the law, how has this deliverance been effected? By the mystery of vicarious obedience and suffering. This is the gospel of the grace of God. This is what was a scandal to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, but, to those that are called, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The Scriptures teach us that the Son of God,

the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, became flesh, and subjected himself to the very law to which we were bound; that he perfectly obeyed that law, and suffered its penalty, and thus, by satisfying its demands, delivered us from its bondage and introduced us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It is thus that the doctrine of redemption is presented in the Scriptures. God, says the apostle, sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those that were under the law.* Being made under the law, we know that he obeyed it perfectly, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and is therefore declared to be the Lord our righteousness, since, by his obedience, many are constituted righteous.† He, therefore, is said to be made righteousness unto us.‡ And those who are in him are said to be righteous before God, not having their own righteousness, but that which is by the faith of Christ.§

That we are redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ's enduring that curse in our place, is taught in every variety of form from the beginning to the end of the Bible. There was the more need

* Gal. iv. 4, 5
† Rom. v. 19.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.
§ Phil. iii 9.

that this point should be clearly and variously presented, because it is the one on which an enlightened conscience immediately fastens. The desert of death begets the fear of death. And this fear of death cannot be allayed, until it is seen how, in consistency with divine justice, we are freed from the righteous penalty of the law. How this is done the Scriptures teach in the most explicit manner. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Paul had just said, As many as are of the law are under the curse. But all men are naturally under the law, and therefore all are under the curse. How are we redeemed from it? By Christ's being made a curse for us. Such is the simple and sufficient answer to this most important of all questions.

The doctrine so plainly taught in Gal. iii. 13, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by bearing it in our stead, is no less clearly presented in 2 Cor. v. 21. He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This is represented as the only ground on which men are authorised to preach the gospel. We are ambassadors for Christ, says the apostle, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's

* Gal. iii. 13.

stead, be ye reconciled to God. Then follows a statement of the ground upon which this offer of reconciliation is presented. God has made effectual provision for the pardon of sin, by making Christ, though holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, sin for us, that we might be made righteous in him. The iniquities of us all were laid on him; he was treated as a sinner in our place, in order that we might be treated as righteous in him.

The same great truth is taught in all those passages in which Christ is said to bear our sins. The expression to bear sin, is one which is clearly explained by its frequent occurrence in the sacred Scriptures. It means to bear the punishment due to sin. In Lev. xx. 17, it is said, He that marries his sister, shall bear his iniquity. Again, Whosoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin. Of him that failed to keep the passover, it was said, that man shall bear his sin.* If a man sin he shall bear his iniquity. It is used in the same sense when one man is spoken of as bearing the sin of another. Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms.† Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.‡ And when, in Ezekiel xviii. 20, it is

* Numbers ix. 13. † Numbers xiv. 33.
‡ Lam. v. 7.

said that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, it is obviously meant that the son shall not be punished for the sins of the father. The meaning of this expression being thus definite, of course there can be no doubt as to the manner in which it is to be understood when used in reference to the Redeemer. The prophet says, The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. He was numbered with transgressors, and bore the sins of many.* Language more explicit could not be used. This whole chapter is designed to teach one great truth, that our sins were to be laid on the Messiah, that we might be freed from the punishment which they deserved. It is therefore said, He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; for the transgression of my people was he smitten. In the New Testament, the same doctrine is taught in the same terms. Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.† Christ was offered to bear the sins of many.‡ Ye know that he was manifested to take away (to bear) our sins.§ According to all these representations, Christ saves us

* Is. liii. 6, 11, 12.
† 1 Peter, ii. 24.
‡ Heb. ix. 28.
§ 1 John iii. 5.

from the punishment due to our sins, by bearing the curse of the law in our stead.

Intimately associated with the passages just referred to, are those which describe the Redeemer as a sacrifice, or propitiation. The essential idea of a sin-offering is propitiation by means of vicarious punishment. That this is the Scriptural idea of a sacrifice, is plain from the laws of their institution, from the effects ascribed to them, and from the illustrative declarations of the sacred writers. The law prescribed that the offender should bring the victim to the altar, lay his hands upon its head, make confession of his crime; and that the animal should then be slain, and its blood sprinkled upon the altar. Thus, it is said, He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.* And he brought the bullock for a sin-offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock of the sin-offering.† The import of this imposition of hands, is clearly taught in the following passage: And Aaron shall lay his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and the

* Lev. i. 4. † Ib. viii. 14.

goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.* The imposition of hands, therefore, was designed to express symbolically the ideas of substitution and transfer of the liability to punishment. In the case just referred to, in order to convey more clearly the idea of the removal of the liability to punishment, the goat on whose head the sins of the people were imposed, was sent into the wilderness, but another goat was slain and consumed in its stead.

The nature of these offerings is further obvious from the effects attributed to them. They were commanded in order to make atonement, to propitiate, to make reconciliation, to secure the forgiveness of sins. And this effect they actually secured. In the case of every Jewish offender, some penalty connected with the theocratical constitution under which he lived, was removed by the presentation and acceptance of the appointed sacrifice. This was all the effect, in the way of securing pardon, that the blood of bulls and of goats could produce. Their efficacy was confined to the purifying of the flesh, and to securing, for those who offered them, the advantages of the external theocracy. Besides, however, this efficacy, which, by divine appointment, belonged to them considered in themselves, they were in-

* Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

tended to prefigure and predict the true atoning sacrifice which was to be offered when the fulness of time should come. Nothing, however, can more clearly illustrate the Scriptural doctrine of sacrifices, than the expressions employed by the sacred writers to convey the same idea as that intended by the term sin-offering. Thus all that Isaiah taught by saying of the Messiah that the chastisement of our peace was upon him; that by his stripes we are healed; that he was smitten for the transgression of the people; that on him was laid the iniquity of us all, and that he bore the sins of many, he taught by saying, he made his soul an offering for sin. And in the epistle to the Hebrews it is said, He was offered (as a sacrifice) to bear the sins of many The same idea, therefore, is expressed by saying, either he bore our sins, or he was made an offering for sin. But to bear the sins of any one, means to bear the punishment of those sins; and, therefore, to be a sin-offering conveys the same meaning.

Such being the idea of a sacrifice which pervades the whole Jewish Scriptures, it is obvious that the sacred writers could not teach more distinctly and intelligibly the manner in which Christ secures the pardon of sin, than by saying he was made an offering for sin. With this mode of pardon all the early readers of the Scriptures were familiar.

They had been accustomed to it from their earliest years. No one of them could recall the time when the altar. the victim and the blood were unknown to him. His first lessons in religion contained the ideas of confession of sin, substitution and vicarious sufferings and death. When, therefore,. the inspired penmen told men imbued with these ideas that Christ was a propitiation for sin, that he was offered as a sacrifice to make reconciliation, they told them, in the plainest of all terms, that he secures the pardon of our sins by suffering in our stead. Jews could understand such language in no other way, and therefore, we may be sure it was intended to convey no other meaning. And in point of fact, it has been so understood by the Christian church from its first organization to the present day.

If it were merely in the way of casual allusion that Christ was declared to be a sacrifice, we should not be authorized to infer from it the method of redemption. But this is far from being the case. This doctrine is presented in the most didactic form. It is exhibited in every possible mode. It is asserted, illustrated, vindicated. It is made the central point of all divine institutions and instructions. It is urged as the foundation of hope, as the source of consolation, the motive to obedience. It is in fact THE GOSPEL. It would be vain to

attempt a reference to all the passages in which this great doctrine is taught. We are told that God set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood.* Again he is declared to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only but for the sins of the whole world.† He is called the Lamb of God that taketh away (beareth) the sins of the world.‡ Ye were not redeemed, says the apostle Peter, with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.§ In the epistle to the Hebrews this doctrine is more fully exhibited than in any other portion of Scripture. Christ is not only repeatedly called a sacrifice, but an elaborate comparison is made between the offering which he presented and those which were offered under the old dispensation. If the blood of bulls and of goats, says the apostle, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit (possessing an eternal spirit) offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living

* Rom. iii. 25. † 1 John ii. 2.
‡ John i. 29. § 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

God.* The ancient sacrifices in themselves could only remove ceremonial uncleanness. They could not purge the conscience or reconcile the soul to God. They were mere shadows of the true sacrifice for sins. Hence they were offered daily. Christ's sacrifice being really efficacious, was offered but once. It was because the ancient sacrifices were ineffectual, that Christ said, when he came into the world, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure, Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. By the which will, adds the apostle, that is, by the accomplishing the purpose of God, we are sanctified (or atoned for) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; and by that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and of all this, he adds, the Holy Ghost is witness.† The Scriptures, therefore, clearly teach that Jesus Christ delivers us from the punishment of our sins, by offering himself as a sacrifice in our behalf; that as under the old dispensation, the penalties attached to the violations of the theocratical covenant, were removed by the substitution and sacrifice of bulls and of goats, so under the spiritual theocracy, in the living temple of the living God,

* Heb. ix. 13, 14. † Heb. x. 5, 15.

the punish nent of sin is removed by the substitution and death of the Son of God. As no ancient Israelite, when by transgression he had forfeited his liberty of access to the earthly sanctuary, was ignorant of the mode of atonement and reconciliation; so now, no conscience-stricken sinner, who knows that he is unworthy to draw near to God need be ignorant of that new and living way which Christ hath consecrated for us, through his flesh, so that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

In all the forms of expression hitherto mentioned, viz: Christ was made a curse for us; he was made sin for us; he bore our sins, he was made a sin offering, there is the idea of substitution. Christ took our place, he suffered in our stead, he acted as our representative. But as the act of a substitute is in effect the act of the principal, all that Christ did and suffered in that character, every believer is regarded as having done and suffered. The attentive and pious reader of the Bible will recognise this idea in some of the most common forms of Scriptural expression. Believers are those who are in Christ. This is their great distinction and most familiar designation. They are so united to him, that what he did in their behalf they are declared to have done. When he died, they died; when he rose, they rose; as he lives, they shall live also.

The passages in which believers are said to have died in Christ are very numerous. If one died for all, says the apostle, then all died (not. were dead.)* He that died (with Christ) is justified from sin, i. e. freed from its condemnation and power; and if we died with Christ, we believe, that we shall live with him.† As a woman is freed by death from her husband, so believers are freed from the law by the body (the death) of Christ, because his death is in effect their death.‡ And in the following verse, he says, having died, (in Christ) we are freed from the law. Every believer, therefore, may say with Paul, I was crucified with Christ.§ In like manner the resurrection of Christ secures both the spiritual life and future resurrection of all his people. If we have been united to him in his death, we shall be in his resurrection. If we died with him, we shall live with him.‖ God, says the apostle, hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.¶ That is, God hath quickened, raised, and exalted us together** with Christ

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † Rom. vi. 7, 8. ‡ Rom. vii. 4.
§ Gal. ii. 20. ‖ Rom. vi. 5, 8. ¶ Eph. ii. 5. 6.

** There is no separate word in the original to answer to the word *together*, which is not to be understood of the union of believers with one another in the participation of these

It is on this ground also that Paul says that Christ rose as the first fruits of the dead; not merely the first in order, but the earnest and security of the resurrection of his people. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* As our union with Adam secures our death, union with Christ secures our resurrection. Adam is a type of him that was to come, that is Christ, inasmuch as the relation in which Adam stood to the whole race is analogous to that in which Christ stands to his own people. As Adam was our natural head, the poison of sin flows in all our veins. As Christ is our spiritual head, eternal life which is in him, descends to all his members. It is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them.† This doctrine of the representative and vital union of Christ and believers, pervades the New Testament. It is the source of the humility, the joy, the confidence which the sacred writers so often express. In themselves they were nothing and deserved nothing, but in Him they possessed all things. Hence they counted all things but loss that they might be found in Him. Hence they determined to know nothing, to preach nothing, to glory in nothing but in Christ and him crucified.

blessings. It is their union with Christ that the passage asserts.

* 1 Cor. xv. 20, 22. † Gal. ii. 20.

The great doctrine of the vicarious sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, is further taught in those numerous passages which refer our salvation to his blood, his death, or his cross. Viewed in connexion with the passages already mentioned, those now referred to not only teach the fact that the death of Christ secures the pardon of sin, but how it does it. To this class belong such declarations as the following. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.* We have redemption through his blood.† He has made peace through the blood of his cross.‡ Being justified by his blood.§ Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.‖ Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling.¶ Elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.** Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.†† He hath redeemed us unto God by his blood.‡‡ This cup, said the Son of God himself, is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.§§ The sacrificial character of the death of Christ is taught in all these passages. Blood was the means of atonement, and without the shedding of blood, there was no remission; and, therefore, when our salvation

* 1 John i. 7. † Eph. i. 7. ‡ Col. i. 20.
§ Rom. v. 9. ‖ Eph. ii. 13. ¶ Heb. xii. 24.
** 1 Pet. i. 2. †† Rev. 1. v. ‡‡ Rev. v. 9.
§§ Matt. xxvi. 28

is so often ascribed to the blood of the Saviour, it is declared that he died as a propitiation for our sins.

The same remark may be made in reference to those passages, which ascribe our redemption to the death, the cross, the flesh of Christ; for these terms are interchanged as being of the same import. We are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son.* We are reconciled by his cross.† We are reconciled by the body of his flesh through death.‡ We are delivered from the law by the body of Christ;§ he abolished the law in his flesh;‖ he took away the handwriting, which was against us, nailing it to his cross.¶ The more general expressions respecting Christ's dying for us, receive a definite meaning from their connexion with the more specific passages above mentioned. Every one, therefore, knows what is meant, when it is said that Christ died for the ungodly;** that he gave himself a ransom for many;†† that he died the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God.‡‡ Not less plain is the meaning of the Holy Spirit when it is said, God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all;§§ that he was de-

* Rom. v. 10.
† Eph. ii. 16.
‡ Col. i. 22.
§ Rom. vii. 4.
‖ Eph. ii. 15.
¶ Col. ii. 14.
** Rom. v. 6.
†† Matt. xx. 28.
‡‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18
§§ Rom. viii. 32.

livered for our offences;* that he gave himself for our sins.†

Seeing then that we owe every thing to the expiatory sufferings of the blessed Saviour, we cease to wonder that the Cross is rendered so prominent in the exhibition of the plan of salvation. We are not surprised at Paul's anxiety lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; or that he should call the preaching of the gospel the preaching of the cross; or that he should preach Christ crucified, both to Jews and Greeks, as the wisdom of God and the power of God, or that he should determine to glory in nothing save in the Cross of Christ.

As there is no truth more necessary to be known, so there is none more variously or plainly taught than the method of escaping the wrath of God due to us for sin. Besides all the clear exhibitions of Christ as bearing our sins, as dying in our stead, as making his soul an offering for sin, as redeeming us by his blood, the Scriptures set him forth in the character of a Priest, in order that we might more fully understand how it is that he effects our salvation. It was predicted long before his advent that the Messiah was to be a priest. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedeck, was the

* Rom. iv. 25 † Gal. i. 4.

declaration of the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David.* Zechariah predicted that he should sit as a priest upon his throne.† The apostle defines a priest to be a man ordained for men in things pertaining unto God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.‡ Jesus Christ is the only real priest in the universe. All others were either pretenders, or the shadow of the great High Priest of our profession. For this office he had every necessary qualification. He was a man. For inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood he also took part of the same in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest; one who can be touched with a sense of our infirmities, seeing he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He was sinless. For such a high priest became us who was holy, harmless and separate from sinners. He was the Son of God. The law made men having infirmity, priests. But God declared his Son to be a priest, who is consecrated for evermore.§ The sense in which Christ is declared to be the Son of God, is explained in the first chapter of this epistle. It is there said, that he is the express image of God; that he upholds all things by the word of his power; that all the

* Ps. cx. 4. † Zechariah, vi. 13.
‡ Heb. v. 1 § Heb. vii. 28.

angels are commanded to worship him; that his throne is an everlasting throne; that in the beginning he laid the foundations of the earth; that he is from everlasting, and that his years fail not. It is from the dignity of his person, as possessing this divine nature, that the apostle deduces the efficacy of his sacrifice,* the perpetuity of his priesthood,† and his ability to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him.‡ He was duly constituted a priest. He glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said to him, Thou art my Son, said also, Thou art a priest for ever. He is the only real priest and, therefore, his advent superseded all others, and put an immediate end to all their lawful ministrations, by abolishing the typical dispensation with which they were connected. For the priesthood being changed, there was of necessity a change of the law. There was a disannulling of the former commandment for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, and there was the introduction of a better hope.§ He has an appropriate offering to present. As every high priest is appointed to offer sacrifices, it was necessary that this man should have somewhat to offer. This sacrifice was not the blood of goats or of

* Heb. ix. 14.
† Ibid. vii. 16.
‡ Ibid. vii. 25.
§ Ibid. vii. 12, 18.

calves, but his own blood; it was himself he offered unto God, to purge our conscience from dead works.* He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, which was accomplished when he was once offered to bear the sins of many.† He has passed into the heavens. As the high priest was required to enter into the most holy place with the blood of atonement, so Christ has entered not into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us,‡ and where he ever lives to make intercession for us.§

Seeing then we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, (let the reader remember what that means), who is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having by himself purged our sins and made reconciliation for the sins of the people, every humble believer who commits his soul into the hands of this High Priest, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, assured that he shall find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

* Heb. ix. 12, 14.
† Ibid. ix. 26, 28.
‡ Ibid. ix. 24.
§ Ibid. vii. 25.

SECTION III. *The righteousness of Christ the true ground of our Justification. The practical effects of this doctrine.*

The Bible, as we have seen, teaches, first, that we are under a law which demands perfect obedience and which threatens death in case of transgression; secondly, that all men have failed in rendering that obedience, and therefore, are subject to the threatened penalty; thirdly, that Christ has redeemed us from the law by being made under it and in our place, satisfying its demands. It only remains to be shown that this perfect righteousness of Christ is presented as the ground of our justification before God.

In scriptural language condemnation is a sentence of death pronounced upon sin; justification is a sentence of life pronounced upon righteousness. As this righteousness is not our own, as we are sinners, ungodly, without works, it must be the righteousness of another, even of him who is our righteousness. Hence we find so constantly the distinction between our own righteousness and tha which God gives. The Jews, the apostle says, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of

God.* This was the rock on which they split. They knew that justification required a righteousness; they insisted on urging their own, imperfect as it was, and would not accept of that which God had provided in the merits of his Son, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. The same idea is presented in Rom. ix. 30, 32, where Paul sums up the case of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of believers. The Gentiles have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel hath not attained it. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. The Jews would not receive and confide in the righteousness which God had provided, but endeavoured, by works, to prepare a righteousness of their own. This was the cause of their ruin. In direct contrast to the course pursued by the majority of his kinsmen, we find Paul renouncing all dependence upon his own righteousness, and thankfully receiving that which God had provided. Though he had every advantage and every temptation to trust in himself, that any man could have; for he was one of the favoured people of God, circumcised on the eighth day, and touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless, yet all these things he counted

* Rom. x. 3.

but loss, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* Here the two righteousnesses are brought distinctly into view. The one was his own, consisting in obedience to the law; this Paul rejects as inadequate, and unworthy of acceptance. The other is of God and received by faith; this Paul accepts and glories in as all sufficient and as alone sufficient. This is the righteousness which the apostle says God imputes to those without works. Hence it is called a gift, a free gift, a gift by grace, and believers are described as those who receive this gift of righteousness.† Hence we are never said to be justified by any thing done by us or wrought in us, but by what Christ has done for us. We are justified through the redemption that is in him.‡ We are justified by his blood.§ We are justified by his obedience.‖ We are justified by him from all things.¶ He is our righteousness.** We are made the righteousness of God in him.†† We are justified in his name.‡‡ There is no condemnation to those who are in him.§§ Justification is therefore, by

* Phil. iii. 9. † Rom. v. 17. ‡ Rom. iii. 24.
§ Rom. v. 9. ‖ Rom. v. 19. ¶ Acts xiii. 39.
** 1 Cor. i. 30. †† 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡‡ 1 Cor. vi. 11.
§§ Rom. viii. 1.

faith in Christ, because faith is receiving and trusting to him as our Saviour, as having done all that is required to secure our acceptance before God.

It is thus then the Scriptures answer the question, How can a man be just with God? When the soul is burdened with a sense of sin, when it sees how reasonable and holy is that law which demands perfect obedience and which threatens death as the penalty of transgression; when it feels the absolute impossibility of ever satisfying these just demands by its own obedience and sufferings, it is then that the revelation of Jesus Christ as our righteousness, is felt to be the wisdom and power of God unto salvation. Destitute of all righteousness in ourselves, we have our righteousness in him. What we could not do he has done for us. The righteousness, therefore, on the ground of which the sentence of justification is passed upon the believing sinner, is not his own but that of Jesus Christ.

It is one of the strongest evidences of the divine origin of the Scriptures that they are suited to the nature and circumstances of man. If their doctrines were believed and their precepts obeyed, men would stand in their true relation to God, and the different classes of men to each other. Parents and children, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects, would be found in their proper sphere, and would attain the

highest possible degree of excellence and happiness. Truth is in order to holiness. And all truth is known to be truth, by its tendency to promote holiness. As this test when applied to the Scriptures generally, evinces their divine perfection, so when applied to the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, it shows that doctrine to be worthy of all acceptation. On this ground it is commended by the sacred writers. They declare it to be in the highest degree honorable to God and beneficial to man. They assert that it is so arranged as to display the wisdom, justice, holiness and love of God, while it secures the pardon, peace and holiness of men. If it failed in either of these objects; if it were not suited to the divine character, or to our nature and necessities, it could not answer the end for which it was designed.

It will be readily admitted that the glory of God in the exhibition or revelation of the divine perfections is the highest conceivable end of creation and redemption; and consequently that any doctrine which is suited to make such exhibition is, on that account, worthy of being universally received and gloried in. Now the inspired writers teach us that it is peculiarly in the plan of redemption that the divine perfections are revealed; that it was designed to show unto principalities and powers the manifold

wisdom of God; that Christ was set forth as a propitiatory sacrifice to exhibit his righteousness or justice; and especially that in the ages to come he might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. It is the love of God, the breadth and length and depth and heigth of which pass knowledge, that is here most conspicuously displayed. Some men strangely imagine that the death of Christ procured for us the love of God; whereas it was the effect and not the cause of that love. Christ did not die that God might love us; but he died because God loved us. God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

As this love of God is manifested towards the unworthy, it is called grace, and this it is that the Scriptures dwell upon with such peculiar frequency and earnestness. The mystery of redemption is, that a Being of infinite holiness and justice should manifest such wonderful love to sinners. Hence

the sacred writers so earnestly denounce every thing that obscures this peculiar feature of the gospel; everything which represents men as worthy, as meriting, or, in any way by their own goodness, securing the exercise of this love of God. It is of grace lest any man should boast. We are justified by grace; we are saved by grace; and if of grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace The apostle teaches us not only that the plan of salvation had its origin in the unmerited kindness of God, and that our acceptance with him is in no way or degree founded in our own worthiness, but moreover, that the actual administration of the economy of mercy is so conducted as to magnify this attribute of the divine character. God chooses the foolish, the base, the weak, yea those who are nothing, in order that no flesh should glory in his presence. Christ is made everything to us, that those who glory, should glory only in the Lord.*

It cannot fail to occur to every reader that unless he sincerely rejoices in this feature of the plan of redemption, unless he is glad that the whole glory of his salvation belongs to God, his heart cannot be in accordance with the gospel. If he believes that the ground of his acceptance is in himself, or

* 1 Cor. i. 27, 31.

even wishes that it were so, he is not prepared to join in those grateful songs of acknowledgment to Him, who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which it is the delight of the redeemed to offer unto him that loved them, and gave himself for them. It is most obvious that the sacred writers are abundant in the confession of their unworthiness in the sight of God. They acknowledged that they were unworthy absolutely and unworthy comparatively. It was of grace that any man was saved; and it was of grace that they were saved rather than others. It is, therefore, all of grace, that God may be exalted and glorified in all them that believe.

The doctrine of the gratuitous justification of sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, not only displays the infinite love of God, but it is declared to be peculiarly honourable to him, or peculiarly consistent with his attributes, because it is adapted to all men. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For WHOSOEVER shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is no narrow, national or sectarian doctrine. It is as broad as the

earth. Wherever men, the creatures of God can be found, there the mercy of God in Christ Jesus may be preached. The apostle greatly exults in this feature of the plan of redemption, as worthy of God; and as making the gospel the foundation of a religion for all nations and ages. In revealing a salvation sufficient for all and suited for all, it discloses God in his true character, as the God and Father of all.

The Scriptures, however, represent this great doctrine as not less suited to meet the necessities of man, than it is to promote the glory of God. If it exalts God, it humbles man. If it renders it manifest that he is a Being of infinite holiness, justice and love, it makes us feel that we are destitute of all merit, nay are most ill-deserving; that we are without strength; that our salvation is an undeserved favour. As nothing is more true than the guilt and helplessness of men, no plan of redemption which does not recognise these facts could ever be in harmony with our inward experience, or command the full acquiescence of the penitent soul. The ascription of merit which we are conscious we do not deserve, produces of itself severe distress; and if this false estimate of our deserts is the ground of the exhibition of special kindness towards us, it destroys the happiness such kindness would otherwise produce. To a soul, therefore, sensible of

its pollution and guilt in the sight of God, the doctrine that it is saved on account of its own goodness, or because it is better than other men, is discordant and destructive of its peace. Nothing but an absolutely gratuitous salvation can suit a soul sensible of its ill-desert. Nothing else suits its views of truth, or its sense of right. The opposite doctrine involves a falsehood and a moral impropriety in which neither the reason nor conscience can acquiesce. The scriptural doctrine, which assumes what we know to be true, viz: our guilt and helplessness, places us in our proper relation to God; that relation which accords with the truth, with our sense of right, with our inward experience, and with every proper desire of our hearts. This is one of the reasons why the Scriptures represent peace as the consequence of justification by faith. There can be no peace while the soul is not in harmony with God, and there can be no such harmony until it willingly occupies its true position in relation to God. So long as it does not acknowledge its true character, so long as it acts on the assumption of its ability to merit or to earn the divine favour, it is in a false position. Its feelings towards God are wrong, and there is no manifestation of approbation or favour on the part of God towards the soul. But when we take our true place and feel our ill-desert, and look upon pardoning mercy as

a mere gratuity, we find access to God and his love is shed abroad in our hearts, producing that peace which passes all understanding. The soul ceases from its legal strivings; it gives over the vain attempt to make itself worthy, or to work out a righteousness wherewith to appear before God. It is contented to be accepted as unworthy, and to receive as a gift a righteousness which can bear the scrutiny of God. Peace, therefore, is not the result of the assurance of mere pardon, but of pardon founded upon a righteousness which illustrates the character of God, which magnifies the law and makes it honorable; which satisfies the justice of God while it displays the infinite riches of divine tenderness and love. The soul can find no objection to such a method of forgiveness. It is not pained by the ascription of merit to itself, which is felt to be undeserved. Its utter unworthiness is not only recognised but openly declared. Nor is it harassed by the anxious doubt whether God can consistently with his justice forgive sin. For justice is as clearly revealed in the cross of Christ, as love. The whole soul, therefore, however enlightened, or however sensitive, acquiesces with humility and delight in a plan of mercy which thus honours God, and which, while it secures the salvation of the sinner, permits him to hide himself in the radiance which surrounds his Saviour.

The apostles moreover, urge on men the doctrine of justification by faith with peculiar earnestness because it presents the only method of deliverance from sin. So long as men are under the condemnation of the law, and feel themselves bound by its demands of obedience as the condition and ground of their acceptance with God, they do and must feel that he is unreconciled, that his perfections are arrayed against them. Their whole object is to propitiate him by means which they know to be inadequate. Their spirit is servile, their religion a bondage, their God is a hard master. To men in such a state, true love, true obedience and real peace are alike impossible. But when they are brought to see that God, through his infinite love, has set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation for our sins, that he might be just, and yet justify those that believe; that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us; they are emancipated from their former bondage and made the sons of God. God is no longer a hard master, but a kind Father. Obedience is no longer a task to be done for a reward; it is the joyful expression of filial love. The whole relation of the soul to God is changed, and all our feelings and conduct change with it. Though we have no works to perform in order to justification, we have every thing to do in order to

manifest our gratitude and love. Do we, therefore, make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. There is no such thing as real, acceptable obedience until we are thus delivered from the bondage of the law as the rule of justification, and are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Till then we are slaves and enemies, and have the feelings of slaves. When we have accepted the terms of reconciliation we are the sons of God and have the feelings of sons.

It must not, however, be supposed that the filial obedience rendered by the children of God is the effect of the mere moral influence arising from a sense of his favour. Though perhaps the strongest influence which any external consideration can exert, it is far from being the source of the holiness which always follows faith. The very act by which we become interested in the redemption of Christ, from the condemnation of the law, makes us partakers of his Spirit. It is not mere pardon, or any other isolated blessing, that is offered to us in the gospel, but complete redemption, deliverance from evil and restoration to the love and life of God. Those, therefore, who believe, are not merely forgiven, but are so united to Christ, that they derive from and through him, the Holy Spirit. This is his great gift, bestowed upon all who come to Him and confide in Him. This is the reason why

he says, Without me, ye can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

The gospel method of salvation, therefore, is worthy of all acceptation. It reveals the divine perfections in the clearest and most affecting light, and it is in every way suited to the character and necessities of men. It places us in our true position as undeserving sinners; and it secures pardon, peace of conscience and holiness of life. It is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. It cannot be a matter of surprise that the Scriptures represent the rejection of this method of redemption, as the prominent ground of the condemnation of those who perish under the sound of the gospel. That the plan should be so clearly revealed and yet men should insist upon adopting some other better suited to their inclinations, is the height of folly and disobedience. That the Son of God should come into the world; die the just for the unjust, and offer us eternal life, and yet we should reject his proffered mercy, proves such an insensibility to his excellence and love, such a love for sin, such a disregard of the approbation and enjoyment of God, that could all other grounds of condemnation be

removed. This alone would be sufficient. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

CHAPTER VI.

FAITH.

SECTION I. *Faith necessary in order to salvation. The nature of saving Faith.*

HOWEVER abundant and suitable may be the provision which God has made for the salvation of men, there are many who fail of attaining eternal life. There are those whom Christ shall profit nothing. Nay, there are those whose condemnation will be greatly aggravated, because they have known and rejected the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It is, therefore, not less necessary that we should know what we must do in order to secure an interest in the redemption of Christ, than that we should understand what he has done for our salvation.

If God has revealed a plan of salvation for sinners, they must, in order to be saved, acquiesce in its provisions. By whatever name it may be called, the thing to be done, is to approve and

accept of the terms of salvation presented in the gospel. As the plan of redemption is designed for sinners, the reception of that plan on our part, implies an acknowledgment that we are sinners and justly exposed to the displeasure of God. To those who have no such sense of guilt, it must appear foolishness and an offence. As it proceeds upon the assumption of the insufficiency of any obedience of our own to satisfy the demands of the law, acquiescence in it, involves the renunciation of all dependence upon our own righteousness as the ground of our acceptance with God. If salvation is of grace, it must be received as such. To introduce our own merit, in any form or to any degree, is to reject it; because grace and works are essentially opposed; in trusting to the one we renounce the other.

As justification is pardon and acceptance dispensed on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, acquiesence in the plan of salvation involves the recognition and acceptance of the work of Christ as the only ground of justification before God. However much the child of God may be perplexed with anxious doubts, and vain endeavours, he is brought at last to see and admire the perfect simplicity of the plan of mercy; he finds that it requires nothing on his part but the acceptance of what is freely offered; the acceptance of it as

free and unmerited. It is under the consciousness of ill-desert and helplessness that the soul embraces Jesus Christ as he is presented in the gospel. This it is that God requires of us in order to our justification. As soon as this is done, we are united to Christ; he assumes our responsibilities; he pleads our cause; he secures our pardon and acceptance on the ground of what he has done; so that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

The nature of the duty required of us in order to our justification, is made, if possible, still more plain by the account which the Bible gives of those who are condemned. They are described as those who reject Christ, who go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God; as those who look to the law or their own works, instead of relying on the work of Christ. They are those who reject the counsel of God against themselves, who, ignorant of their character and of the requirements of God, refuse to be saved by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The word by which this acceptance of Christ is commonly expressed in the Bible, is FAITH. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have eternal life. He that believeth on

him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? and they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The Gentiles have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel hath not attained it, because they sought it not by faith. Knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. This is his commandment, That we should believe on his son Jesus Christ. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.

Language so plain and so varied as this, cannot be misunderstood. It teaches every serious inquirer after the way of life, that in order to salvation, he

must believe in Jesus Christ. Still, though he knows what it is to believe, as well as any one can tell him, yet as he reads of a dead, as well as of a living faith, a faith of devils and a faith of God's elect; as he reads on one page that he that believes shall be saved, and on another, that Simon himself believed, and yet remained in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, he is often greatly perplexed and at a loss to determine what that faith is which is connected with salvation. This is a difficulty which is inseparable from the use of language. The soul of man is so wonderful in its operations; its perceptions, emotions, and affections are so various and so complicated, that it is impossible there should be a different word for every distinct exercise. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the same word should be used to express different states of mind, which have certain prominent characteristics in common. The definite, in distinction from the general or comprehensive meaning of the word, is determined by the context; by explanatory or equivalent expressions; by the nature of the thing spoken of, and by the effects ascribed to it. This is found sufficient for all the purposes of intercourse and instruction We can speak without being misunderstood, of loving our food, of loving an infant, of loving a parent, of loving God, though in each of these

cases the word love represents a state of mind peculiar to itself, and different from all the others. There is in all of them a pleasurable excitement on the perception of certain qualities, and this we call love, though no two states of mind can well be more distinct, than the complacent fondness with which a parent looks upon his infant, and the adoring reverence with which he turns his soul towards God.

We need not be surprised, therefore, that the word faith is used in Scripture to express very different exercises, or states of mind. In its widest sense, faith is an assent to truth upon the exhibition of evidence. It does not seem necessary that this evidence should be of the nature of testimony; for we are commonly and properly said to believe whatever we regard as true. We believe in the existence and attributes of God, though our assent is not founded upon what is strictly called testimony. But if faith means assent to truth, it is obvious that its nature and attendants must vary with the nature of the truth believed, and especially with the nature of the evidence upon which our assent is founded. A man may assent to the proposition, that the earth moves round its axis, that virtue is good, that sin will be punished, that to him, as a believer, God promises salvation. In all these cases there is assent, and therefore faith, but

the state of mind expressed by the term, is not always the same. Assent to a speculative or abstract truth is a speculative act, ; assent to a moral truth, is a moral act; assent to a promise made to ourselves, is an act of trust. Our belief that the earth moves round its axis is a mere assent. Our belief in the excellence of virtue is, in its nature, a moral judgment. Our belief of a promise is an act of trust. Or if any choose to say that trust is the result of assent to the truth of the promise, it may be admitted as a mere matter of analysis, but the distinction is of no consequence, because the two things are inseparable, and because the Scriptures do not make the distinction. In the language of the Bible, faith in the promises of God is a believing reliance, and no blessing is connected with mere assent as distinguished and separated from reliance.

It is, however, of more consequence to remark that the nature of the act by which we assent to truth, is modified by the kind of evidence upon which our assent is founded. The blind may believe, on the testimony of others, in the existence of colours and the deaf in the harmony of sounds, but their faith is very different from the faith of those who enjoy the exercise of the sense of sight or hearing. The universal reputation of such men as Bacon and Newton and the acknowledged

influence of their writings, may be the foundation of a very rational conviction of their intellectual superiority. But a conviction, founded upon the perusal and appreciation of their own works, is of an essentially different character. We may believe on the testimony of those in whose veracity and judgment we confide, that a man of whom we know nothing has great moral excellence. But if we see for ourselves the exhibition of his excellence, we believe for other reasons, and in a different way. The state of mind, therefore, which, in the language of common life and in that of the sacred Scriptures, is expressed by the word faith, varies essentially with the nature of the evidence upon which our belief rests.

One man believes the Bible to be the word of God, and the facts and doctrines therein contained to be true, simply on the testimony of others. Born in a Christian land and taught by his parents to regard the Scriptures as a revelation from God, he yields a general assent to the truth, without troubling himself with any personal examination into the evidence upon which it rests. Another believes because he has investigated the subject. He sees that there is no rational way of accounting for the miracles, the accomplishment of predictions, the success and influence of the gospel, except upon the assumption of its divine origin. Others, again

believe because the truths of the Bible commend themselves to their reason and conscience, and accord with their inward experience. Those, whose faith rests upon this foundation, often receive the word with joy, they do many things, and have much of the appearance of true Christians; or, like Felix, they believe and tremble. This is the foundation of the faith which often surprises the wicked in their last hours. Men who all their lives have neglected or reviled the truth and who may have accumulated a treasury of objections to the authority of the Scriptures, are often brought to believe by a power which they cannot resist. An awakened conscience affirms the truth with an authority before which they quail. Their doubts and sophistries fly affrighted before the majesty of this new revealed witness for the truth. To disbelieve is now impossible. That there is a God, that he is holy and just, and that there is a hell, they would give the world to doubt, but cannot. Here is a faith very different in its origin, nature, and effects from that which rests upon the authority of men, or upon external evidence and argument. Though the faith just described, is generally most strikingly exhibited at the approach of death, it often happens that men who are habitually careless, are suddenly arrested in their career. Their conscience is aroused and enlightened. They feel those things to be true,

which before they either denied or disregarded. The truth, therefore, has great power over them. It destroys their former peace. It forces them to self-denial and the performance of religious duties. Sometimes this influence soon wears off, as conscience subsides into its accustomed slumber. At others it continues long, even to the end of life. It then constitutes that spirit of bondage and fear under which its unhappy subjects endeavour to work out a way to heaven, without embracing the gospel of the grace of God. The effects produced by a faith of this kind, though specifically different from the fruits of the Spirit, are not always easily detected by the eye of man. And hence many who appear outwardly as the children of God, are inwardly under the dominion of a spirit the opposite of the loving, confiding, filial temper of the gospel.

There is a faith different from any of those forms of belief which have yet been mentioned. It is a faith which rests upon the manifestation by the Holy Spirit, of the excellence, beauty, and suitableness of the truth. This is what Peter calls the precious faith of God's elect. It arises from a spiritual apprehension of the truth, or from the testimony of the Spirit with and by the truth in our hearts. Of this faith the Scriptures make frequent mention. Christ said, I thank thee, O Father

Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* The external revelation was made equally to the wise and to the babes. To the latter, however, was granted an inward illumination which enabled them to see the excellence of the truth, which commanded their joyful assent. Our Saviour therefore added, No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. When Peter made his confession of faith in Christ, our Saviour said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.† Paul was a persecutor of the church; but when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he at once preached the faith which he before destroyed. He had an external knowledge of Christ before; but this internal revelation he experienced on his way to Damascus, and it effected an instant change in his whole character. There was nothing miraculous or peculiar in the conversion of the apostle, except in the mere incidental circumstances of his case. He speaks of all believers as having the same divine illumination. God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath

* Luke x. 21. † Matthew xvi. 17.

shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.* On the other hand, he speaks of those whose minds the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. In the second chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, he dwells much upon this subject, and teaches not only that the true divine wisdom of the gospel was undiscoverable by human wisdom, but that when externally revealed, we need the Spirit that we may know the things freely given to us of God. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. Hence the apostle prays for his readers, that the eyes of their understandings (hearts) might be opened, that they might know the hope of their calling, the riches of their inheritance, and the greatness of the divine power of which they were the subjects.† And in another place, that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.‡ By spiritual understanding is meant that insight into

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Eph. i. 18, 19.
‡ Colossians, i. 9.

the nature of the truth which is the result of the influence of the Spirit upon the heart. Since faith is founded on this spiritual apprehension, Paul says, he preached not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, because a faith which resulted from such preaching could be at best a rational conviction; but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the faith of his hearers might stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* Hence faith is said to be one of the fruits of the Spirit, the gift of God, the result of his operation.† These representations of the Scriptures accord with the experience of the people of God. They know that their faith is not founded upon the testimony of others, or exclusively or mainly upon external evidence. They believe because the truth appears to them both true and good; because they feel its power and experience its consolations.

It is obvious that a faith founded upon the spiritual apprehension of the truth, as it differs in its origin, must also differ in its effects, from every other kind of belief. Of the multitudes who believe the Scriptures upon authority or on the ground of external evidence, how large a portion disregard their precepts and warnings! To say that such persons do not believe, though true in one

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. † Eph. ii. 8. Col. ii. 12

sense, is not true in another. They do believe and to assert the contrary is to contradict their conscientiousness. The state of mind which they exhibit. is in the Bible called faith, though it is dead. This rational conviction, in other cases, combined with other causes, produces that decorous attention to the duties of religion and that general propriety of conduct, which are so often exhibited by the hearers of the gospel. The faith which is founded on the power of conscience produces still more marked effects; either temporary obedience and joy, or the despair and opposition manifested by the convinced, the dying, and the lost; or that laborious slavery of religion of which we have already spoken. But that faith which is the gift of God, which arises from his opening our eyes to see the excellence of the truth, is attended with joy and love. These feelings are as immediately and necessarily attendant on this kind of faith, as pleasure is on the perception of beauty. Hence faith is said to work by love. And as all revealed truth is the object of the faith of which we now speak, every truth must, in proportion to the strength of our faith, produce its appropriate effect upon the heart. A belief of the being and perfections of God, founded upon the apprehension of his glory, must produce love, reverence and confidence, with a desire to be conformed to his

image Hence the apostle says: We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.* Faith in his threatenings, founded upon a perception of their justice, their harmony with his perfections, and the ill-desert of sin, must produce fear and trembling. His people, therefore, are described as those who tremble at his word. Faith in his promises, founded upon the apprehension of his faithfulness and power, their harmony with all his revealed purposes, their suitableness to our nature and necessities, must produce confidence, joy and hope. This was the faith which made Abraham leave his own country, to go to a strange land; which led Moses to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. This was the faith of David also, of Samuel, and of all the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. This is the faith which leads all the people of God to confess that

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This is the faith which overcomes the world, which leads the believer to set his affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; which enables him to glory even in tribulation, while he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

And what shall we say of a faith in Jesus Christ founded upon the apprehension of the glory of God, as it shines in him; which beholds that glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth; which contemplates the Redeemer as clothed in our nature; the first born of many brethren; as dying for our sins, rising again for our justification, ascending into heaven and as now seated at the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us? Such a faith the apostle tells us, must produce love, for he says, Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory The soul gladly receives him as a Saviour in all the characters and for all the purposes for which he is revealed; and naturally desires to be conformed

to his will, and to make known the unsearchable riches of his grace to others.

It is no less obvious that no one can believe the representations given in the Scriptures respecting the character of man and the ill-desert of sin, with a faith founded upon right apprehension of the holiness of God and the evil of his own heart, without experiencing self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, and a constant hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thus of all the truths in the word of God, it may be said, that so far as they are believed in virtue of this spiritual apprehension, they will exert their appropriate influence upon the heart and consequently upon the life. That such a faith should not produce good fruits is as impossible as that the sun should give light without heat. This faith is the living head of all right affections and of all holy living; without it all religion is a dull formality, a slavish drudgery, or at best a rationalistic homage. Hence we are said, to live by faith, to walk by faith, to be sanctified by faith, to overcome by faith, to be saved by faith. And the grand characteristic of the people of God is, that they are BELIEVERS.

SECTION II. *Faith as connected with justification.*

What has been said hitherto is designed to illustrate the nature of saving faith, as it is represented in the Scriptures. It differs from all other acts of the mind to which the term faith is applied, mainly on account of the nature of the evidence on which it is founded. The Bible, however, is more definite in its instructions on this subject. Besides teaching us that there is a faith which receives as true all the declarations of God, in virtue of an evidence exhibited and applied by the Holy Spirit, it tells us what those particular acts of faith are, which secure our justification before God. It plainly teaches that we are justified by those acts of faith which have a special reference to Christ and his mediatorial work. Thus we are said to be justified by faith in his blood.* The righteousness of God is said to be by faith of Jesus Christ; that is, by faith of which he is the object.† This expression occurs frequently; Knowing, says the apostle, that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.‡ Not having my own righteous

* Rom. iii. 25. † Rom. iii 22. ‡ Gal. ii. 16.

which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.* In all these places and in many others of a similar kind, it is expressly stated that Christ is the object of justifying faith. The same doctrine is taught in those numerous passages, in which justification or salvation is connected with believing in Christ. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life.† He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.‡ Whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.§ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.‖ The same truth is involved in all the representations of the method of justification given in the word of God. We are said to be justified by the death of Christ, by the blood of his cross, by the redemption that is in him, by the sacrifice of himself, by his bearing our sins, by his obedience, or righteousness. All these representations imply that Christ in his mediatorial character, is the special object of justifying faith. It is indeed impossible that any man should believe the record which God has given of his Son, without believing every other record which he has given, so far as it is known and apprehended; still the special act of faith, which is connected with our justification, is

* Phil. iii. 9. † John iii. 16. ‡ Ibid. 36.
§ Acts x. 43. ‖ Acts xvi. 31.

belief in Jesus Christ as the Saviour from sin. And when we are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ, the Scriptural meaning of the expression is that we should trust, or confide in him. It does not express mere assent to the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, which angels and devils exercise; but it expresses trust which involves knowledge and assent. To believe in Christ as a propitiation for sin, is to receive and confide in him as such.

From this representation it is clear what we must do to be saved. When the mind is perplexed and anxious from a sense of sin and the accusations of conscience; when the troubled spirit looks round for some way of escape from the just displeasure of God, the voice of mercy from the lips of the Son of God is, come unto me, believe upon me, submit to be saved by me. Till this is done, nothing is done. And when this cordial act of faith in Christ is exercised, we are accepted for his sake, and he undertakes to save us from the do minion and condemnation of our sins. The expe rience of the people of God, when they are made the recipients of that divine illumination which reveals to them the glory of God, their own unwor thiness, and the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, is no doubt very various. It is modified by their previous knowledge, by their peculiar state of mind, by the particular truth which happens to attract

their attention, by the clearness of the manifestation and by many other circumstances. This diversity is readily admitted, yet since no man can come unto the Father but by the Son; since without faith in him there is no forgiveness and no access to God, it must still be true that, with greater or less distinctness of apprehension, Christ and his mediatorial work constitute the object of the first gracious exercises of the renewed soul. Any approach to God, any hope of his favour, any peace of conscience or confidence of pardon, not founded upon him, must be delusive. Having, (that is, because we have) such an High Priest we come with boldness to the throne of grace; and this is the only ground on which we can venture to draw near. The whole plan of redemption shows that there is no pardon, no access to God, no peace or reconciliation except through Jesus Christ. And this idea is so constantly presented in the Bible, that all genuine religious experience must be in accordance with it.

It is, however, of such vital importance for the sinner distinctly to understand what it is that is required of him, that God has graciously so illustrated the nature of saving faith that the most illiterate reader of the Scriptures may learn the way of life. It is not merely by the term faith, or believing, that this act of the soul is expressed, but by many others of equivalent import. The

consideration of a few of these will serve to explain more distinctly the plan of salvation, by showing at once the nature, object and office of justifying faith.

One of the most comprehensive and intelligible of these equivalent terms is that of receiving. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him.† Believers are therefore described as those who receive the gift of righteousness;‡ as those who gladly receive the word.§ To receive Jesus Christ is to accept and recognise him in the character in which he presents himself, as the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, as a propitiation for our sins, as a ransom for our souls, as the Lord our righteousness. He came to his own and his own received him not. The Jews would not recognise him as the Messiah, the only mediator between God and man, as the end of the law for righteousness. They denied the Holy One, and put far from them the offer of life through him. Could the nature, the object, or office of faith be presented more clearly than they are by this representation? Can the soul, anxious about salvation, doubt wha

* John i. 12 † Col. ii. 6.
‡ Rom. v. 17. § Acts ii. 41.

it has to do? Jesus Christ is presented to him in the gospel as the Son of God, clothed in our nature, sent by the Father to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to redeem us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. All that we have to do, is to receive him in this character; and those who thus receive him he makes the sons of God, that is, the objects of his favour, the subjects of his grace and the heirs of his kingdom.

A still more simple illustration of the nature of faith is contained in those passages in which we are commanded to look unto God. Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.* Our Saviour avails himself of this figure, when he says, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.† The dying Israelite, who was commanded to turn his feeble eye on the brazen serpent, was surely at no loss to know the nature of the duty required of him. He knew there was no virtue in the act of looking. He might look in vain all round the wide horizon. He was healed, not for looking, but because the serpent was placed there by the command of God, and salvation made to

* Is. xlv. 22. † John iii. 14, 15.

depend upon submitting to the appointed method of relief. Why then should the soul convinced of sin and misery be in doubt as to what it has to do? Christ has been set forth as crucified; and we are commanded to look to him and be saved. Can any thing be more simple? Must not every attempt to render more intelligible the Saviour's beautiful illustration, serve only to darken counsel by words without wisdom?

Another striking illustration of this subject, may be found in Heb. vi. 18, where believers are described as those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. As of old, the man-slayer, when pursued by the avenger of blood, fled to the city of refuge, whose gates were open night and day, and whose highways were always unincumbered; so the soul, under the sense of its guilt and convinced that it must perish if it remains where it is, flees to Jesus Christ, as the appointed refuge and finds peace and security in him. There the avenger cannot touch him; there the law which before denounced vengeance, spreads its ample shield around him and gives him the assurance of safety.

A still more common method of expressing the act of saving faith is to be found in such passages as John vi. 35. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never

thirst. All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Here coming and believing are interchanged as expressing the same idea. So also in the following chapter, where our Saviour says, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. Hence the invitations and commands of the gospel are often expressed by this word. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And in the closing invitation of the sacred volume, The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Though this language is so plain that nothing but the illumination of the Spirit can render it plainer, yet the troubled soul perplexes itself with the inquiry, what is it to come to Christ? Though assured that he is not far from any one of us, we are often forced to cry out, O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. It is often the very simplicity of

the requirement that deceives us. We think we must do some great thing, which shall bear a certain proportion to the blessing connected with it. We cannot believe that it is merely looking, merely receiving, merely coming as the prodigal came to his father, or as the Israelite came to the high priest who was appointed to make atonement for the sins of the people. Yet is it even thus that we must come to the High Priest of our profession, with confession of sin, and submit to the application of his blood as the appointed means of pardon, and rejoice in the assurance of the divine favour. Or still more impressively, as the Hebrew believer came to the altar, laid his hand with confession upon the head of the victim, and saw it die in his stead, so does the trembling soul come to Christ as its propitiatory sacrifice, and confiding in the efficacy of his death, looks up to God and says, My Father! Coming to Christ, therefore, is the confiding reception of him in the offices and for the purposes for which he is presented in the word of God, as our mediator and priest, as our advocate with the Father, as our Redeemer and Lord.

Another term by which faith is expressed is submitting. This is not to be understood as meaning a submission to the will of God as a sovereign ruler, a giving up all our controversy with him and resigning ourselves into his hands. All this is

duty, but it is not saving faith. The submission required is submission to the revealed plan of salvation; it is the giving up all excuses for our sins, all dependence upon our own righteousness, and submitting to the righteousness which God has provided for our justification. This is what the Jews refused to do, and perished in unbelief.* This is what we must do, in order to be saved. Men, when sensible of their guilt and danger, are perplexed and anxious about many things. But there is only one thing for them to do. They must submit to be saved as ungodly, as sinners, as entirely undeserving, solely for Christ's sake. They must consent to allow the robe of his righteousness to be cast over all their nakedness and blood, that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. Then will they be prepared to join that great multitude which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and

* Rom. x. 3. and xi. 20.

nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.

It is thus that the Bible answers the question, What must we do to be saved? We are told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and to set forth the nature, the object and office of this faith, the Scriptures employ the most significant terms and illustrations, in order that we may learn to renounce ourselves and our works, and to be found in Christ depending solely upon what He has done and suffered as the ground of our acceptance with God. Those who thus believe, have passed from death unto life; they are no longer under condemnation; they have peace with God and rejoice in hope of his glory. As this faith unites them with Christ, it makes them not only partakers of his death, but of his life. The Holy Spirit, given without measure to him, is through him given unto them, and works in them the fruits of holiness, which are unto the praise and glory of God.

CHAPTER VII.

REPENTANCE.

CLEARLY as the Scriptures teach that whosoever believes shall be saved, they teach no less clearly that except we repent we shall all perish. These graces are not only alike indispensable, but they cannot exist separately. Repentance is a turning from sin unto God, through Jesus Christ, and faith is the acceptance of Christ in order to our return to God. Repentance is the act of a believer; and faith is the act of a penitent. So that whoever believes repents; and whoever repents believes.

The primary and simple meaning of the word commonly used in the New Testament to express the idea of repentance, is a change of mind, as the result of reflection. In this sense, it is said, There is no repentance with God. He is not a man that he should repent. In the same sense it is said, that Esau found no place for repentance, when he was unable to effect a change in the determination of his father. In the ordinary religious sense of the

term, it is a turning from sin unto God. This is the account commonly given of it in the word of God. I thought upon my ways, said the Psalmist, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.† Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.‡ And Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, said, If the people shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried away captives, and shall repent and make supplication unto thee, saying, We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness, and so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul; then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause.§ To repent, then, is to turn from sin unto God. But as there is a repentance which has no connexion with salvation, it becomes us to search the Scriptures that we may learn the characteristics of that repentance which is unto life.

* Ps. cxix. 59. † Ezek. xviii. 27.
‡ Is. lv. 7. § 1 Kings, viii. 47, 49.

As conviction of sin is an essential part of repentance and as that point has already been considered, it will not be necessary to dwell long upon this general subject. The prominence, however, given to it in the Scriptures, and the large space which it occupies in the experience of Christians, demand that the nature of this turning from sin, which is so often enjoined, should be carefully studied.

There is one general truth in relation to this point which is clearly taught in the Bible; and that is, that all true repentance springs from right views of God. The language of Job may with more or less confidence be adopted by every Christian: I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.*

The discovery of the justice of God serves to awaken conscience, and often produces a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. This is the natural and reasonable effect of a clear apprehension of the rectitude of the divine character, as of a judge who renders to every one his due. There are accordingly many illustrations of the effects of this apprehension recorded in the Scriptures. Fearfulness and trembling, said the

* Job xlii. 5, 6.

Psalmist, are fallen upon me; and horror hath overwhelmed me.* While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me. Thy terrors have cut me off.† There is no rest in my bones because of my sins For my iniquities have gone over my head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.‡ These fearful forebodings are so common in the experience of the people of God, that the earlier writers make terror of conscience a prominent part of repentance. There are, however, two remarks upon this subject, which should be borne in mind. The first is, that these exercises vary in degree from the intolerable anguish of despair, to the calm conviction of the judgment that we are justly exposed to the displeasure of God. And secondly, that there is nothing discriminating in these terrors of conscience. They are experienced by the righteous and the unrighteous. If they occurred in the repentance of David, they did also in that of Judas. Sinners in Zion are often afraid; and fearfulness often surprises the hypocrite. These fearful apprehensions, therefore, are not to be desired for their own sake; since there is nothing good in fear. It is reasonable that those should fear who refuse to

* Ps. lv. 5. † Ibid. lxxxviii. 15, 16.
‡ Ibid. xxxviii. 3.

pent and to accept of the offers of mercy. But there is nothing reasonable in those fears which arise from unbelief, or distrust of the promises of God. It so often happens, however, in the experience of the people of God, that they are made sensible of their guilt and danger, before they have any clear apprehensions of the plan of redemption, that, in fact, fear of the wrath of God enters largely into the feelings which characterise their conversion. The apprehension of the holiness of God produces awe. The angels in heaven are represented as veiling their faces, and bowing with reverence before the Holy One. Something of the same feeling must be excited in the minds of men by the discovery of His infinite purity. It cannot fail, no matter what may be the state of his mind, to excite awe. This, however, may be mingled with love, and express itself in adoration; or it may co-exist with hatred, and express itself in blasphemy. Very often the effect is simply awe; (or at least this is the prominent emotion,) and the soul is led to prostrate itself in the dust. The moral character of this emotion can only be determined by observing whether it is attended with complacency in the contemplation of infinite purity, and with a desire of larger and more constant discoveries of it; or whether it produces uneasiness and

a desire that the vision may be withdrawn and we be allowed to remain at ease in our darkness.

In the next place, this discovery of the holiness of God cannot fail to produce a sense of our own unworthiness. It is in his light that we see light. It is by the apprehension of his excellence that we learn our own vileness. And as no man can be aware that he appears vile in the sight of others, without a sense of shame, we find that this emotion is described as being one of the most uniform attendants upon repentance. Thus Ezra, in his penitential prayer, says, O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.* Daniel expresses the same feeling when he says, O Lord. righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day.† And God when describing the restoration of his people, even when assuring them of pardon, says, Thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest be confounded and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.‡

As the consciousness of unworthiness when we

* Ezra ix. 6 † Dan. ix. 7. ‡ Ezek. xvi. 63.

think of others, produces shame so, when we think of ourselves, it produces self-abhorrence. This latter feeling, therefore, also enters into the nature of true repentance. In the strong language of the suffering patriarch already quoted, the sinner abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. In another passage the same distinguished servan of God says, Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* And the prophet describing the repentance of the people says, Ye shall remember your ways and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all the evil that ye have committed.† It is not the strength, but the nature of these feelings, which determines the character of our repentance. Their nature is the same in all true penitents; their strength varies in every particular case. In all, however, the sense of sin destroys that self-complacency with which sinners soothe themselves, thanking God they are not as other men. It humbles them before God, and places them in the position which he would have them occupy. To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word.‡ With such a soul God condescends to take up his abode. For

* Job xl. 4. † Ezek. xx. 43. ‡ Is. lxvi. 2.

thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

This humbling sense of our unworthiness, which produces true contrition and self-abasement, is essential to repentance. Most men are willing to acknowledge themselves to be sinners; but they are at the same time disposed to extenuate their guilt; to think they are as good as could be reasonably expected; that the law of God demands too much of beings so frail as man, and that it would be unjust to visit their deficiencies with any severe punishment. The change which constitutes repentance destroys this disposition to self-justification. The soul bows down before God under the consciousness of inexcusable guilt. It stands self-condemned, and, instead of regarding God as a hard master, it acknowledges that he is righteous in all his demands, and in all his judgments. Such were the feelings of David, when he said, I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be

* Is. lvii. 15

justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.* The same feeling is expressed by Ezra O Lord God of Israel thou art righteous . . behold we are before thee in our trespasses, for we cannot stand before thee because of this.† And Nehemiah uses language to the same effect; Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.‡ There can, therefore, be no true repentance without this contrite spirit of self-condemnation and abasement.

The confession of sin, on which the Scriptures lay so much stress, is the outward expression of this inward sense of ill-desert. It is not enough that we should secretly condemn ourselves. God requires a full and ingenuous confession of our sins. And this our own hearts will prompt us to make. As there is no desire in the penitent to exenuate his guilt, so there is no disposition to conceal it. On the contrary, the soul is anxious to acknowledge every thing; to take shame to itself, and to justify God. We accordingly find that a large part of the penitential portions of the Scriptures is taken up in recording the confessions of the people of God. When I kept silence, said the Psalmist, my bones waxed old through my roaring

* Ps. li. 4. † Ezra ix. 15. ‡ Neh. ix. 33.

all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* So long as he attempted to conceal his guilt, he found no relief; the hand of God continued to press heavily upon him; but when he acknowledged his transgressions he obtained forgiveness. The wise man therefore says, He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.† The New Testament is equally explicit as to this part of our duty. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.‡

This confession must be made to the person against whom we have sinned. If we have sinned against our fellow men, we must confess to them. If we have sinned against the church, we must confess to the church; and if we have sinned against God, our confession must be made to God. The Old Testament, in commanding restitution in case of injury done to our neighbour, thereby com-

* Ps. xxxii. 3. † Prov. xxviii. 13. ‡ 1 John i. 8, 9.

manded acknowledgement to be made to the injured party. And in the New Testament we are required to confess our faults one to another.* As, however, the great majority of our sins are committed against God, it is to him that our confessions are to be principally made. And even in those cases in which we sin against men, we, in a still higher sense, sin against God. Our sense of guilt in his sight, therefore, will prevail over the sense of our injustice to those whom we have offended. Thus David, though he had, in the most grievous manner, sinned against his neighbour, was so affected with the enormity of his sin as committed against God, that he said, Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.† In the inspired records of penitential sorrow, we accordingly find that confession is constantly made to God. Let thine ear now, said Nehemiah, be attentive and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant which I pray before thee, now day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father's house have sinned, and have dealt very corruptly against thee, have not kept the commandments or the statutes, nor the judgments which

* James v. 16 † Ps. li. 4.

thou commandest thy servant Moses. Indeed the greater portion of the remarkable prayers of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which form the most authentic record of the exercises of genuine repentance, is taken up with confessions of sin; which shows how essential such confession is to the proper discharge of this duty. No man, therefore, whose heart does not lead him freely, fully and humbly to acknowledge his sin before God, can have any satisfactory evidence that he truly repents.

There is indeed a confession which remorse extorts from the lips of those whose hearts know nothing of that godly sorrow which is unto life. Thus Judas went to his accomplices in treachery and said, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood; and then went and hanged himself. This, however, is very different from that ingenuous acknowledgment of sin which flows from a broken spirit, and which is the more full and free, the stronger the assurance of forgiveness.

Though the Scriptures plainly teach that in all true repentance there is a sense of sin, self-loathing, self-condemnation, sorrow and confession, yet such is the poverty of human language, that these very terms may be, nay, must be, employed to express the exercises of those who do not truly repent. It is said of Judas that he repented; and we cannot doubt that his repentance included a convic-

tion of guilt, sorrow, self-abhorrence and confession. Yet all this was nothing more than the operation of that impenitent remorse which often drives men to despair, and which serves to feed the fire that never shall be quenched. Although we are forced to describe the exercises which attend the sorrow of the world, and those which accompany the sorrow which is of God, by the same terms, they are nevertheless essentially different in their nature. There is a gleam of hope and a glow of love pervading the exercises of the true penitent, which impart to all his exercises a peculiarity of character, and cause them to produce effects specifically different from those which flow from despairing remorse, or the agitations of an awakened conscience. His views of the justice and holiness of God produce, not only a conviction of sin and sorrow for having committed it; but also an earnest desire to be delivered from it as the greatest of all evils, and an anxious longing after conformity to the image of God, as the greatest of all blessings. The repentance of the ungodly consists in the operations of conscience combined with fear; the repentance of the godly, of the operations of conscience combined with love. The one is the sorrow of the malefactor; the other the sorrow of a child. The one tends to despair and opposition to God; the other to hope and a desire after his favour

Both may lead to obedience; but the obedience in the one case is slavish; in the other, filial. In the one case it is mere penance; in the other it is repentance.

The circumstance which, perhaps, most perceptibly distinguishes true repentance from mere conviction and remorse, is, that the former flows from the apprehension of the mercy of God. There is no hope in the repentance of the ungodly. They may see by the light of conscience and of the divine law, that their sins are exceedingly great. They may be filled with terror from the apprehension of divine justice, and even humbled and confounded under a view of the infinite holiness of God and of their own vileness, but there is no sense of forgiving mercy, no apprehension of the divine favour. Instead, therefore, of turning towards God, they turn from him. After the example of Adam, they would gladly hide themselves from his presence. And so terrible, at times, is that presence, that they madly seek a refuge from it in the darkness of the grave, or call upon the rocks and the mountains to cover them. This is the sorrow which worketh death. But in every case of real turning unto God, there is more or less distinct apprehension of his mercy. This may be so feeble as only to enable the soul to say, Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him; or, Who knoweth if he will return and re-

pent and leave a blessing behind him ?* or, to adopt the language of David, If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again. But if he thus say, I have no pleasure in him; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.† This, however, is sufficient to turn fear into hope, and rebellion into submission.

It may be that the hope which saves the soul from sinking into despair and which prevents it from turning from God in aggravated opposition, is at times, nothing more than a conviction that he is merciful, without any distinct apprehension of the way in which his mercy can be exercised, or any confident persuasion of our own acceptance. Still the soul believes that he is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.‡ It has courage to adopt the language of the Psalmist: Thou God art good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy to all those that call upon thee.§ In all the records of penitence, therefore, contained in the Scriptures, we find the recognition of the divine goodness as the great operative principle in turning the soul unto God. Thus Nehemiah says, Thou art a God ready to pardon gracious and merciful

* Joel ii. 14. † 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.
‡ Ex. xxxiv. 6 § Ps. lxxxvi. 5.

slow to anger, and of great kindness.* And the prophet presents this consideration as the great motive to those whom he calls to repentance; Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and repenteth him of evil.†

But inasmuch as there can be no confidence of forgiving mercy, which is not founded on the revelation of the purpose of God; and as there is no revelation of a purpose to pardon except through the mediation of Jesus Christ, so however indistinct may be, at times, the view which the soul takes of the plan of salvation, there must still be a reference to the Saviour in all authorized expectations of mercy. The penitent may not know how God can be just and yet the justifier of sinners, and yet be persuaded not only that he is merciful, but that he has found a ransom and can consistently save us from going down into the pit. Doubtless, however, under the light of the gospel, it is far more common that the soul sees all that it discovers of the mercy of God and of the possibility of pardon in the face of Jesus Christ. It is in him that God has revealed himself as reconciled unto the world, not imputing unto men their trespasses. It is because he was made sin for us, that we can be made

* Neh. ix. 17. † Joel ii. 13

the righteousness of God in him. All evangelical hope rests on the assurance that though we have sinned we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. This is the hope which is effectual in winning the soul back to God. It is the discovery of the love of God in giving his own Son that whosoever believes on him, should not perish but have eternal life. It is this that breaks the hard heart, revealing to it the exceeding turpitude of its sins, and at the same time disclosing the readiness of God freely to forgive those who come to him through Christ. It is therefore not so much the threatenings of the law, as the apprehension of the love of God, which turns the sinner from his rebellion, and draws him back to submission and obedience. All repentance without this is legal and slavish. It is such as that of Pharaoh, or Judas, or of the thousands whom an awakened conscience and fear of wrath drive from their former sins, and force to walk in clanking chains along a mistaken road in search of heaven. This is the only repentance which conscience and the apprehension of divine justice can produce. A soul cannot approach an unreconciled God, any more than it can embrace a consuming fire. A sense of the favour of God, or a hope in his mercy, is essential to our returning to him with confidence and love.

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There is indeed a belief in the mercy of God which, instead of leading men to repentance, encourages them to continue in sin. This is a belief which arises out of ignorance. It is founded on a misapprehension of the character of God. It is easy for those who know nothing of the divine holiness and justice and who look upon sin as a misfortune or a trifle, to believe that God will not be severe to mark iniquity. To such persons the mercy of God seems a matter of course; restricting its offers to no class of men, but covering with its mantle the sins of the penitent and of the reprobate. As they see no reason why God should not forgive, they easily hope in his mercy. But when their eyes are opened to his immaculate purity which forbids his looking on sin with allowance; to his justice which forbids him to spare the guilty; to the strictness of his law and to the fearfulness of its penalty; when conscience is aroused and adds its sanction to the judgment of God, in a voice whose authority and power can neither be questioned nor evaded, then these hopes of mercy are seen to be as the spider's web. They are swept away in a moment, and the difficulty now is, to believe that pardon, once thought so certain, is even possible Hence the assurances that God is plenteous in mercy and ready to forgive are so numerous and earnest in the Scriptures. Hence the way in which

mercy can be exercised, consistently with those attributes which are seen to enter into the essential excellence of God, is so clearly set forth. Hence the invitations, the promises, yea, even the oath of God, are given to beget hope in the mind of the convinced and humbled sinner. It is not the whole, but the sick, who need the physician; and it is not for the careless, who feel no need of pardon, but for the anxious, who fear that there is scarcely room for mercy, that these assurances are given.

It is not, therefore, that hope of mercy which springs from ignorance and indifference, which is operative in the work of repentance, but that which is founded upon the promises of God embraced by faith. It is an enlightened hope. The soul in entertaining it, knows something of the difficulties in the way of pardon, and something of the method in which mercy can be consistently exercised. Such a hope is not a matter of course; nor is it an easy attainment. The sense of sin, the testimony of conscience, the holiness of God, the honour of his law, are all apparently opposed to any reasonable expectation of forgiveness. And, therefore, although the declarations of Scripture are so explicit on the subject, it often happens that the awakened sinner feels that though these declarations may be true in reference to others, they cannot be true as it regards himself And when the goodness of

God is revealed to him; when he sees the divine love surmounting all difficulties, no shipwrecked mariner surrounded by darkness and tossed by tempests, hails with greater joy the break of day than does such a soul the revelation of divine mercy. It is not joy merely; it is wonder, gratitude and love that take possession of his soul and fill him with the purpose of living devoted to God his Redeemer. It is this hope which gives new life to the soul, and accomplishes its return from the service of sin to the service of God.

Hope in the mercy of God being thus important, it is the great design of the Bible to reveal the love of God to sinners, in order to bring them back from their apostasy. The sacred volume is full of instruction on this important subject. Every command to repent, implies a readiness on the part of God to forgive. Every institution of divine worship implies that God is willing to receive those who return to him. Every instance of pardon mentioned in the Bible is left on record to show that there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. With the same view he has given those declarations of his mercy, long-suffering and love, with which the Scriptures abound. And above all, for this purpose has he set forth his Son as a propitiation for our sins, that we may see not only that he is merciful, but how he can be merciful and yet

just. These offers of mercy are made to all who hear the gospel, even to those whose sins are as scarlet, or red like crimson; and none lose the benefit of them who do not voluntarily and wickedly reject them; either carelessly supposing that they need no forgiveness, or unbelievingly refusing to accept of pardon on the only terms on which it can be granted.

That repentance, therefore, which is unto life, is a turning; not a being driven away from sin by fear and stress of conscience, but a forsaking it as evil and hateful, with sincere sorrow, humility and confession; and a returning unto God, because he is good and willing to forgive, with a determination to live in obedience to his commandments.

There are but two ways in which we can judge of the genuineness of this change. The one is the comparison of our inward experience with the word of God; the other the observation of its effects. As every man is conscious of his own feelings, attention and comparison will generally enable him to ascertain their character. He may tell whether he has had such views of the justice and holiness of God as to produce a conviction of his own sinfulness and ill-desert; whether he has been forced to give up his self-complacency and to feel that disapprobation of his character and conduct, which leads the soul to confess with shame

and sorrow its guilt and pollution in the sight of God. He may tell whether he has had such apprehensions of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ as to induce him to return to his heavenly Father, with a strong desire after his favour, and with a firm determination to live to his glory. These are the exercises which constitute repentance, and he who is conscious of them may know that he is turned from death unto life.

As, however, true self-knowledge is the most difficult of all attainments; and as the feelings, unless unusually strong, are hard to be detected in their true nature, the surest test of the character of any supposed change of heart is to be found in its permanent effects. By their fruits ye shall know them, is a declaration as applicable to the right method of judging of ourselves as of others. Whatever, therefore, may have been our inward experience; whatever joy or sorrow we may have felt, unless we bring forth fruits meet for repentance, our experience will profit us nothing. Our repentance needs to be repented of, unless it leads us to confession and restitution in cases of private injury: unless it causes us to forsake not merely outward sins, which attract the notice of others, but those which lie concealed in the heart; unless it makes us choose the service of God, as that which is right and congenial, and causes us to

live not for ourselves but for him who loved us and gave himself for us

There is no duty the necessity of which is either more obvious in itself, or more frequently asserted in the word of God, than that of repentance. Nature itself teaches us that when we have done wrong, we should be sorry for it, and turn away from the evil. Every man feels that this is a reasonable expectation in regard to those who have offended him. Every parent especially looks with anxiety for the repentance of a disobedient child; and he considers nothing worthy of the name, but sincere sorrow and a return to affectionate obedience. No man need wonder, therefore, that God who requires nothing but what is right and who can require nothing less, commands all men every where to repent. The salvation offered in the gospel, though it be a salvation of sinners, is also a salvation from sin. The heaven which it promises is a heaven of holiness. The rivers of pleasure which flow from the right hand of God, are filled with the pure waters of life. No man, therefore, can be saved, who does not, by repentance, forsake his sins. This is itself a great part of salvation. The inward change of heart from the love and service of sin, to the love and service of God, is the great end of the death of Christ, who gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it

with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. A salvation for sinners, therefore, without repentance, is a contradiction.

Hence it is that repentance is the burden of evangelical preaching. Our Saviour himself when he began to preach, said, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.* And when he came into Galilee preaching the gospel, he said, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel.† The commission which he gave his apostles was, That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.‡ In the execution of this commission his disciples went forth and preached, Repent ye and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.§ Paul, in the account which he gave Agrippa of his preaching, said that he showed first unto them in Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then unto the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God, and do works meet for repentance.‖ And he called upon the elders at

* Matt. iv. 17. † Mark i. 15. ‡ Luke xxiv. 47.
§ Acts iii. 19. ‖ Acts xxvi. 20.

Ephesus to bear witness that he had taught publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Repentance then is the great, immediate and pressing duty of all who hear the gospel. They are called upon to forsake their sins and to return unto God through Jesus Christ. The neglect of this duty, is the rejection of salvation. For, as we have seen, unless we repent we must perish. It is because repentance is thus indispensably necessary, that God reveals so clearly not only the evil of sin, and the terrors of his law, but his infinite compassion and love; that he calls upon us to turn unto him and live, assuring us that he is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. This call to repentance commonly follows men from the cradle to the grave. It is one of the first sounds which wakes the infant's ear; it is one of the last which falls on the failing senses of the dying sinner. Every thing in this world is vocal with the voice of mercy All joy and all sorrow are calls to return unto God with whom are the issues of life. Every opening grave, every church, every page of the Bible, is an admonition or an invitation

* Acts xx. 21.

Every serious thought or anxious foreboding is the voice of God, saying, Turn ye, for why will ye die? It is through all these admonitions that men force their way to death. They perish, because they deliberately reject salvation.

It is one of the mysteries of redemption, that under the economy of mercy, all duties are graces. Though repentance is our duty, it is not less the gift of God. Those who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, gladly seize on such truths either as an excuse for delay, under pretence of waiting God's time, or as a palliation of the guilt of a hard and impenitent heart. But those who feel the greatness of the work required of them, rejoice in the truth, and rouse themselves with new energy to their duty, no longer a hopeless task, and with all earnestness work out their own salvation, because it is God that worketh in them to will and to do, according to his own pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

SECTION I. *The nature and necessity of a public profession of religion.*

RELIGION consists in a great measure in the secret intercourse of the soul with God; in those acts of adoration, gratitude, confidence and submission which the eye of man cannot see, and with which the stranger cannot intermeddle. These secret exercises by controlling the external conduct, and by supplying the motives for the humble demeanor and benevolent actions of the Christian, cannot indeed fail to manifest their existence; but all unnecessary parading them upon the notice of others borders on the offence which our Saviour condemned in the ancient Pharisees. Agreeably to his directions, our alms are to be given in secret, when we pray we should pray in secret, and when we fast, we should not appear unto men to fast, but unto our Father, who seeth in secret. In these

words Christ does more than condemn hypocrisy; he not only forbids the performance of religious duties with the design of being seen of men, but he teaches that true religion is unobtrusive and retiring. It avoids the glare of day. It is holy, solemn, secret, rejoicing in being unobserved. It is directly opposed to the ostentatious display of religious feelings in which those delight, who seem to make religion consist in talking about it.

Although religion is thus retiring in its character, and although it consists in a great measure in the secret intercourse of the soul with God, it nevertheless has its social and public relations, which render it impossible that a true Christian should desire to keep the fact of his being a Christian a secret from the world. This is indeed often attempted, for a time, by those whose faith is weak, and who dread the reproach with which a profession of religion is, under many circumstances, attended. The temptation to such concealment cannot well be appreciated by those who have always lived in the bosom of a religious society, where the profession of religious sentiments is a passport to confidence and respect. Such persons little know the trial to which those of their brethren are exposed whose parents or associates view all experimental religion with hatred or contempt, and who visit every manifestation of pious feeling with the chastisement

of cruel mockings. To a greater or less degree, a large portion of the people of God, are called upon to endure this trial; and they are often tempted to ask whether they cannot be religious without letting it be known. If religion is a secret thing, why may it not be kept a secret? To this question the answer is simple and decisive. The confession of Christ before men is declared in Scripture to be essential to salvation. Whosoever, said our Saviour, confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my father which is in heaven; but whosoever denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Again, whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and with the holy angels.† Paul also in writing to Timothy says, Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.‡ If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.§ And still more explicitly, when teaching the condition of salvation, he says, If thou shalt confess with thy

* Matt x. 32. 33. † Mark viii. 38. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 8
§ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* The same truth is taught in all those passages which assert the necessity of baptism, because baptism involves a public profession of the gospel. Thus our Saviour in his commission to the apostles said, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.† And on the day of Pentecost, when the people were convinced of the sin of having rejected Christ, and asked what they should do, Peter answered, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus.‡ It was not enough that they should retire to their houses and repent before God; they must publicly acknowledge Christ and their allegiance to him. There is, therefore, no condition of discipleship more clearly laid down than this. If we do not confess Christ, he will not confess us. If we do not acknowledge him as our Saviour, he will not acknowledge us as his disciples. If we are not willing to share with him in the reproach and contradiction of sinners, we cannot share in the glory which he has received from the Father.

* Rom. x. 9, 10. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Acts ii. 38.

The relation in which we stand to Christ as our king renders a public acknowledgment of his authority necessary. In the kingdoms of this world, no one is admitted to the privileges of citizenship without a profession of allegiance. And in the kingdom of Christ those who do not acknowledge his authority, reject him. By refusing to confess him as Lord they declare that they are not his people

The church is also often compared in Scripture to a family. Can a child live in his father's house without acknowledging his parent? May he receive the blessings of a mother's love, and not acknowledge her to be his mother? May he pass her in the street without recognition, and then steal, under cover of the night, to be fed at her table and to be protected by her care? As every one feels that no child, with proper filial feelings, could hesitate to acknowledge his parents, so we may be assured that we are not the children of God, if we are afraid or ashamed to acknowledge him as our Father, and our obligations to honour and obey him

It is still further to be considered that Christians are the worshippers of Christ. The apostle salutes the Corinthians as those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus; and from the beginning, in Jerusalem and at Damascus, Christians were designated

as those who called on the name of Christ.* But what kind of a worshipper is he who is ashamed or afraid to acknowledge his God? All the relations, therefore, in which a Christian stands to Christ, as his king, as the head of the family of God and as the object of divine worship, involve the necessity of confessing him before men; and we practically reject him in all these relations by neglecting or refusing this public profession of him and his religion.

A moment's consideration of the nature of the religion of Jesus Christ must convince us of the impossibility of being a secret Christian. Not the heart only, but the whole external deportment must be regulated by that religion. It forbids many things which the world allows; it enjoins many things which the world forbids. Obedience to its precepts of necessity includes a public profession; because such obedience draws a line of distinction between its disciples and the people of the world. This is one of the reasons why the people of God are called saints. They are distinguished, separated from others and consecrated to God. When they cease to be thus distinguished from those around them, they cease to be saints. If their in

* Acts ix. 14 21.

ward temper and outward conduct do not mark them out as a peculiar people, they are not Christians. A city set on an hill cannot be hid. It cannot be that those who deny themselves and take up their cross and daily follow Christ; whose affections are set upon things above; who walk by faith and not by sight; who live unto God and keep themselves unspotted from the world, should not visibly differ from those whose spirit, principles and objects are all worldly. Nor is it possible that this difference should exist, without an avowal, on the part of the Christian, of the cause of it. He must appeal to the authority of Christ as the justification of his conduct, and, therefore, cannot live as a Christian without confessing Christ.

Besides the general temper and deportment required by the gospel, there are many specific duties enjoined by Christ which imply a public profession of his religion. The organization of his church as a visible society, supposes the separation of a people recognising his authority, and professing to act in obedience to his laws. The commission which he gave to his disciples was, that they should go into all the world, preaching his gospel, making disciples, baptizing them in his name, gathering them into distinct societies and appointing officers over them for conducting public worship and for the exercise of discipline All this supposes that his

followers should constitute a body publicly acknowledging him as their head, and confessing him as their Lord and Saviour before the world. How can a man keep the fact of his being a Christian a secret, when Christianity is, by its author, made to assume this visible, organized form? It is specially enjoined upon every believer to associate himself with the church, to assemble with his fellow Christians for public worship, and to unite with them in celebrating the Saviour's death? If a Christian is one who obeys Christ, and if obedience includes those external acts which involve this public acknowledgment of him, then no man can be a Christian who does not make this acknowledgment.

There are few duties (and those founded on positive precepts) commanded in the word of God, which right feelings do not, of themselves, urge us to discharge. If we are required to forsake sin, to serve God, to love the brethren, to live for others rather than ourselves, to be instant in prayer, to join in the public and social worship of God; these are things in which the renewed heart instinctively delights. The external command guides and sanctions the performance; but the motive to obedience is not mere regard to authority. In like manner, while the public confession of Christ is enjoined in Scripture as a necessary duty, it is, at the same time, the spontaneous tribute of every

Christian heart. If no subject requires to be urged to acknowledge a sovereign whom he loves: if no child needs to be commanded to confess a parent whom he reveres, much less does the believer need to be forced to confess the Saviour whom he regards as the brightness of the Father's glory; to whom he feels indebted for redemption, and whom he hopes to worship and serve with saints and angels in heaven. It is not meant to be asserted that no believer is ever ashamed of Jesus; nor that under circumstances of peculiar trial he may not fear to acknowledge his truth or to assume his name. Peter once denied his master. But it is certainly true that no man can have right views of Christ and right feelings towards him, without habitually, openly and gladly acknowledging him as his God and Saviour. He will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

It is not difficult to understand the nature of the duty now under consideration. To confess Christ is to recognise his character and claims. It is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. It is to admit the truth of the doctrines which he taught. It is to profess our allegiance to him as our Lord and Saviour. This confession must be public; it

must be made before men; it must be made with the mouth, and not left to be inferred from the conduct It should be remembered that this includes more than the mere assumption of the name Christian, in distinction from Pagan or Mahommedan. If men misconceive or misrepresent the character of Christ, a profession of such erroneous views is not the confession which he requires. To acknowledge Christ merely as a good man, or an inspired teacher, is in fact to deny him in his true character as the Son of God, as the propitiation for sin, as the only mediator and the sovereign Lord of the living and the dead. And to acknowledge the gospel merely as a code of morals, is to reject it as the revelation of the grace of God. The confession which is required is the public acknowledgment of Christ in his true character, and of his gospel in its real nature. It will not do to strip the gospel of every thing offensive to human pride and to acknowledge the rest. The very thing to be done is to take the shame of professing what is a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It is to acknowledge our faith and confidence in a Saviour despised and rejected of men, and in doctrines which human reason can neither discover nor comprehend

There are several ways in which this public confession is to be made. As already remarked

there is a confession included in the obedience rendered to the commands of Christ. Obedience, therefore, is one form of confession, and can never be rendered without distinguishing those who yield it as the followers of Christ. Again, occasions frequently occur in which Christians are called upon to avow the truth, to defend it against gainsayers, to urge it upon those over whom they have influence or authority, or to give a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. But the chief and most important mode of confession is attendance upon the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper. So much prominence is given to these institutions, in the word of God, that every Christian should have clear ideas of their nature and of his own duty in regard to them.

SECTION II. *Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The nature, design and efficacy of these ordinances.*

That Baptism and the Lord's supper, whatever other important ends they may be intended to serve, were appointed as a mode of publicly professing our faith in the gospel, is clearly taught in the Bible The public participation of the rites of any religion is, in its nature, a profession of that religion. It is on this ground the apostle charges with idolatry the

Corinthians who, within the precincts of the heathen temples, partook of the sacrifices offered to idols. I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say. The participation of a Christian ordinance, is it not an act of Christian worship? The participation of a Jewish sacrifice, is it not an act of Jewish worship? and by parity of reasoning, is not the participation of a heathen ordinance an act of heathen worship? This is the purport of the apostle's argument in 1 Cor. x. 15—21, and it is obviously founded on the admitted truth, that joining in the celebration of the ordinances of the gospel, is, from the nature of the act, a profession of the religion of Christ. The recipient thereby places himself in communion with the object of worship and with all his fellow worshippers. For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of one bread. Hence the apostle adds, Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils. It is impossible to be in communion with Christ and Satan at the same time, and, therefore, it is the grossest inconsistency to partake at the same time of the ordinances of Christ and of the sacrifices of devils. All this supposes that a participation of Christian ordinances is a profession of the Christian religion. When Christ commanded the apostles to make disciples, baptizing them, &c.

he obviously intended that baptism should be a badge of discipleship, or that by that rite his followers should acknowledge their relation to him This, indeed, is the prominent idea in the formula, To baptize in the name of any one. And hence Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were not his disciples or followers, by asking them, Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? It is, however, unnecessary to dwell upon this point, as it is universally conceded that the participation of the ordinances of the gospel is the appointed mode of confessing Christ before the world.

As it is the duty of every Christian to confess Christ, and to confess him in this particular way, it is necessary to inquire more particularly into the nature and design of these ordinances. It has long been customary in the church to call these institutions sacraments. Little light, however, can be derived from the use of this term, because it is not a scriptural word, and because it is employed by ancient writers in a very comprehensive sense. As it comes from the word meaning *to consecrate*, any thing sacred was called a sacrament. The Romans applied the term to a sum of money deposited in the hands of the High Priest to abide the decision of a suit. They also called the oath by which soldiers consecrate themselves to the military service sacrament; and in the Latin church, (whence we

have borrowed the word), it was used as synonymous with mystery, not only as applied to things which had a hidden meaning, but in its wider sense as signifying what was undiscoverable by human reason. In this sense the Gospel itself, the calling of the Gentiles, the future conversion of the Jews are sacraments. It is not from a word of such latitude of meaning that the nature of the Christian ordinances can be learned; but, on the contrary, the Christian sense of the word must be determined from what the Scriptures teach concerning the ordinances to which the word is now applied.

They are, in the first place, rites of divine appointment, and not of human institution. When Christ was about to ascend into heaven, he said, Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. The rite of baptism was, therefore, instituted by Christ, and is to be continued as long as there are disciples to be made, even unto the end of the world. And on the night in which he was betrayed, he instituted the Lord's supper, saying, This do in remembrance of me, with the command that it should be observed until he comes. The New Testament furnishes abundant evidence that

the apostles enjoined, both by precept and example, the observance of these ordinances, agreeably to the Saviour's directions. No rite, therefore, is a sacrament in the Christian sense of the term, which is not a matter of divine appointment, and of perpetual obligation.

In the second place, the Bible teaches us that the sacraments are the signs of spiritual blessings. They are designed by outward, significant actions, to represent inward, spiritual gifts. The great blessing offered in the Gospel is union with Christ, and the consequent participation of his merits and spirit, by which we are freed from the condemnation and pollution of sin. And this is the blessing which baptism and the Lord's supper are designed to represent. Hence it is said, As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; which implies union with him.* Believers are said to be baptized into one body.† That is, by baptism they are constituted one body; but they are one body only in virtue of their union with their common head. Know ye not, asks the apostle, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? *i. e.* so as to be united with him in his death.‡ As union with Christ is the great blessing signified by baptism, and as

* Gal. iii. 27. † 1 Cor. xii. 13. ‡ Rom. vi. 2.

pardon and sanctification are the consequences of that union, this ordinance is also represented as symbolizing these two great blessings of the covenant of grace. Thus on the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the people, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.* And Ananias said to Paul, Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.† In many similar passages the reference of baptism to pardon is very clearly expressed.

No less clear is its intended significancy of sanctification. This is plainly taught in the passages from the epistles to the Galatians and Romans, quoted above, in which baptism is declared to represent our union with Christ, and our death to sin and our living unto God. And in the epistle to Titus,‡ it is called "the washing of regeneration;" and in the epistle to the Ephesians,§ Christ is said to sanctify his church "with the washing of water by the word." It need hardly be remarked that the ordinance is appropriately significant of these great truths. Water is the common means of purification. Both the guilt and pollution of sin, are represented in Scripture as a

* Acts ii. 38. † Acts xxii. 16. ‡ Titus iii. 5.
§ Eph. v. 26.

defilement, and hence they are said to be washed away by the blood and Spirit of Christ. It is this two-fold purification that is so appropriately represented by the ordinance in question.

The same truths, under a different aspect, are exhibited in the Lord's supper. That the bread represents the body of Christ, and the wine his blood, is expressly declared by our Saviour when he said, "This is my body, this is my blood." And by our participation of the bread and wine, our participation of that of which they are the symbols, is clearly represented. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.* Here, as in the passage quoted above in reference to baptism, believers are declared to be one body, because by partaking of the Lord's supper their communion with the Lord Jesus is expressed. These ordinances, therefore, though in different ways, set forth the same great truth. They are both divinely appointed symbols of our union with Christ, and of our participation of the benefits which flow from his mediation and death.

* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

We should greatly err, however, if we supposed they were merely signs. We are taught that they are seals; that they were appointed by Christ to certify to believers their interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Among men a seal is used for the purpose of authentication and confirmation. It is intended to assure the party concerned that the document to which it is attached, is genuine and binding. In condescension to our weakness, God has been pleased not only to promise pardon and purity to believers, but to appoint these ordinances as seals of his promises. The simple assurance given to Noah that the earth should not a second time be destroyed by a deluge, might have been a sufficient foundation for confidence; but God saw fit to appoint the rainbow to be a perpetual confirmation of his covenant; and throughout all generations when that bow appears, men feel that it is not merely a sign of the returning sun, but a divinely appointed pledge of the promise of God. In like manner God willing more abundantly to show unto his people the immutability of his promise, has confirmed it by these seals, which are designed to assure the believer that as certainly as he receives the signs of the blessings of the covenant, he shall receive the blessings themselves.

That these ordinances were really intended to confirm the promises of God, is plain from the fact

that Paul says that circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith; that is, it was designed to assure Abraham and his descendants that God would regard and treat as righteous all who believed his words. And that something similar is intimated by the ordinance of baptism, may be inferred from the manner in which the apostle speaks of the spiritual import of circumcision, and then of baptism, in Col. ii 10. 12. And in reference to the Lord's supper, the Saviour said, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; that is, the new covenant was ratified by his blood. Of that blood the cup is the appointed memorial, and it is, therefore, at the same time, the memorial and confirmation of the covenant itself; it is the assurance to us that God has promised the blessings of that covenant to all believers. Baptism and the Lord's supper are, therefore, visible pledges or confirmations of the fact that Christ has died, that his death has been accepted as a propitiation for sin, and that God, for his sake, will grant pardon, sanctification and eternal life to all them that believe.

If however, the sacraments are seals on the part of God, the reception of them implies a voluntary engagement on the part of the Christian to devote himself to the service of Christ. The gospel is represented under the form of a covenant. It is so called by Christ himself. But a covenant implies mutual stipulations. God promises to his

people pardon and salvation; in his strength, they promise faith and obedience. The sacraments are the seals of this covenant. God, in their appointment, binds himself to the performance of his promise; his people, by receiving them, bind themselves to trust and serve him. This idea is included in the representation given in Romans vi. 3, 4, where believers are said to have been buried with Christ in baptism, that as he rose from the dead, they also should walk in newness of life It is included also in the very formula of baptism; for to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, implies a voluntary dedication of ourselves to God, as our Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier. The same thing is taught in all the passages in which a participation of Christian ordinances, is said to include a profession of the gospel; for the gospel imposes duties as well as promises blessings.

It is probably in this view of these ordinances that the name, sacraments, was so generally applied to them. For as the oath by which the soldier consecrated himself to the military service, was called a sacrament, so the ordinances in which the believer binds himself to the service of Christ, was appropriately designated by the same term. The phrase sacramental host is, therefore, not inaptly applied to the people of God, considered as a great

multitude, who have solemnly bound themselves by sacraments to live to his glory.

Baptism and the Lord's supper being ordinances of divine appointment and perpetual obligation, designed to distinguish the followers of Christ from the world; to exhibit the truths of the gospel; to seal to believers the divine promises, and to bring them into covenant with God, the interesting question arises, What good do they do? What benefits are we authorized to expect from them? The answer commonly given to this question by the great body of evangelical Christians is, that the sacraments are efficacious means of grace, not merely exhibiting to, but actually conferring upon those who worthily receive them, the benefits which they represent. As they are divinely appointed to set forth Christ and his benefits, and to assure the believer of his interest therein, they have, even as moral means, a powerful influence to confirm his faith, to excite his gratitude and love, and to open the fountains both of penitence and joy. But as the word of God has not only its own moral influence, as truth, in the sanctification of the soul, but also, when attended by the demonstration of the Spirit, a divine and effectual power; so the sacraments have not only the influence due to the lively exhibition of truth, but as means of God's appointment, and attended by his Spirit, they become

efficacious signs of grace, communicating what they signify. Nothing less than this can satisfy the strong language of the Scriptures on this subject, or the experience of God's people. When the Christian, in the exercise of faith, sees in the water of baptism the lively emblem of the purifying influence of the blood and Spirit of Christ, and in the bread and wine the memorials of the Saviour's death, and knows that they are appointed to be a pledge of the salvation of all believers, he receives Christ, in receiving the appointed symbols of his grace; he receives anew the forgiveness of his sins; he enters into fellowship with God, and his soul is filled with the Holy Ghost. Hence it is that believers so often find their strength renewed, their faith confirmed, their purposes invigorated, their hearts filled with joy and love, while attending on these ordinances.

As the efficacy of the sacraments is a subject of great practical importance, it is necessary to examine more particularly what the Scriptures teach on this subject. Baptism is called the washing of regeneration; it is said to unite us to Christ,* to make us partakers of his death and life,† to wash away our sins,‡ to save the soul.§ The bread and

* Gal. iii. 27. † Rom. vi. 4, 5 ‡ Acts xxii. 16
§ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

wine, in the Lord's supper, are said to be the body and blood of Christ; to partake of these emblems, is said to secure union with Christ and a participation of the merits of his death.* These and similar passages must be understood either with or without limitation. If they are to be limited, the limitation must not be arbitrarily imposed, but supplied by the Scriptures themselves. We have no right to say that the sacraments confer these benefits in every case in which no moral impediment is interposed, because no such limitation is expressed in the passages themselves, nor elsewhere taught in the Scriptures. The limitation which the Scriptures do impose on these passages is the necessity of faith. They teach that the sacraments are thus efficacious, not to every recipient, but to the believer; to those who already have the grace which these ordinances represent. If it be asked how they can be said to confer the grace which is already possessed? let it be remembered that he who has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ, needs the application to be often repeated, he who has received the Holy Spirit needs to receive him again; he who has received Christ needs to receive him day by day that he may live upon him. That the Scriptures teach that the

* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

passages in question are to be understood with the qualification just stated, is clear because otherwise they would teach that every one who is baptized is a child of God, renewed by the Holy Spirit, united to Christ and made a partaker of the saving benefits of his death. But this cannot be true, first, because the Bible abundantly teaches that those who are renewed and receive the Holy Spirit, have the fruits of the spirit, love, gentleness, goodness, and faith. Where these are not, there the Spirit is not. But these fruits do not uniformly, nor even generally attend the reception of the outward ordinance. We know that although Simon Magus was baptized, he remained in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. We know, from Paul's epistles, that many of the baptized Galatians and Corinthians were the enemies of the cross of Christ. We know from our own daily observation that multitudes of those who are baptized and received to the Lord's supper, do not differ in temper or life from the world around them. God, therefore, in the actual administration of his kingdom, contradicts that interpretation of his word which makes it teach that the sacraments always confer the benefits which they represent. It is to degrade the renewing of the heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost, into things of no account, to represent them as the portion of the unholy multitudes who in every age

and church have been admitted to baptism and the Lord's supper.

In the second place this interpretation is opposed to what the Scriptures elsewhere teach of the nature of sacraments. The opinion that such ordinances uniformly convey grace and introduce the recipient into favour with God, was one of those false doctrines of the Jews which Paul so earnestly combatted. Great is the virtue of circumcision for no circumcised person enters hell, was the confident and destructive persuasion of the formalists of that age. In opposition to this doctrine, the apostle assured them that circumcision would, indeed, profit them, if they kept the law; but if they broke the law, their circumcision became uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.* We have here a very explicit statement of the nature and efficacy of a sacrament. It has no efficacy in itself considered; its value depends on the presence or performance of the condition of the covenant to which it is attached If the Jews kept the law, their circumcision secured to them all the blessings of the covenant under

* Rom. ii. 25—29.

which they lived. But if they broke the law, their circumcision was of no avail. It was, therefore, not external circumcision that made a man a Jew; but the circumcision of the heart, of which the external rite was the sign. In like manner it is not external baptism that makes a man a Christian, but the baptism of the Spirit, of which the washing with water is the appointed symbol. The two are not necessarily connected, and where the latter is wanting, the former can be of no avail. And, lest it should be supposed that we have no right to apply what is said of the sacraments of the old dispensation to those of the new, the very same doctrine is taught in reference to the New Testament sacraments themselves. The apostle Peter says, We are saved by water; not ordinary water, but by baptism; not mere external baptism, however, but by the sincere turning of the heart to God, that is, by the inward change of which baptism is the outward sign.* This passage, in its doctrinal import, is precisely parallel to that referring to circumcision just quoted. Neither rite, therefore, necessarily conveyed the grace of which they were the signs, and to neither is any value ascribed apart from the spiritual change which they are appointed to represent. In like manner, in reference to the Lord's

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

supper, the apostle teaches that, so far from the mere external act being necessarily connected with the reception of the benefits of Christ's death, those who ate and drank unworthily, ate and drank judgment to themselves. Nothing, indeed, can be more opposed to the whole spirit of the religion of the Bible, than the doctrine that external rites are necessarily connected with spiritual blessings; that the favour of God is to be obtained by mere unresisting submission to religious ceremonies. A man may be baptized, or circumcised on the eighth day, he may belong to the purest and most apostolic church, he may be blameless as touching all the external prescriptions of the Gospel, and still be destitute of the grace of God and unprepared for his presence. It is not by works of righteousness, much less by ceremonial observances, that we are to be saved, but by the righteousness of Christ and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that baptism which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and the baptism which is unto salvation, is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.

In the third place, that the sacraments are not designed to convey grace to those who have it not. This is plain because the Scriptures require those who are admitted to these ordinances to make a profes

sion of their faith and repentance. When the apostles began to preach, we are told that, Those that gladly received the word were baptized.* When the eunuch desired to be baptized, Philip said to him, if thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.† Cornelius did not receive the Holy Spirit, in the first instance by baptism, but when Peter had evidence that he had already received the Spirit, he asked, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?‡ Paul was a penitent believer before his baptism; and thus in all other cases when men were baptized, they professed to be Christians. They were not made Christians by their admission to the sacraments; but their Christian character or standing was thereby acknowledged. It has accordingly been the custom in all ages to require a profession of faith on the part of those who are received to sealing ordinances. But faith is an exercise of a renewed heart; and if faith supposes regeneration, and baptism supposes faith, then by the voice of the church as well as of Scripture, baptism also supposes the renovation of the heart.

Finally, God bears his testimony against the doctrine which teaches an inseparable connexion

* Acts ii. 41. † Acts viii. 37. ‡ Acts x. 47.

between these ordinances and spiritual blessings, by granting these blessings to those who have not received any sacramental rite. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised; Cornelius was a just man, and accepted of God, and a recipient of the Holy Ghost, before he was baptized; the penitent thief was assured of his admission into paradise though he was never born of water. If then the Scriptures require the evidence of regeneration in those who would acceptably attend upon the sacraments; if they teach that many who receive the outward sign do not receive the inward grace; and on the other hand, that many receive the inward grace, who have not received the outward sign, then do they also teach that these ordinances are not appointed to convey, in the first instance, pardon and sanctification, but to be signs and seals of these blessings to the penitent believer, and that to him, and to him only are they efficacious means of grace.

It is, therefore, obvious that those passages in Scripture which refer our salvation to baptism and the Lord's supper cannot, consistently with the plain teaching of the Bible, be understood strictly according to the letter. At the same time it must not be supposed that they are to be perverted, or taken in any other than their natural sense; that is, in any other sense than that which the universally

received rules of interpretation justify and require. It is agreeable to the common language of men and to the usage of the Scriptures, that when any declaration or service is the appointed means of professing faith and obedience, making such declaration or performing such service is said to secure the blessings which are promised to the faith thereby professed. It is said, whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is born of God: and again, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. This is said because confession implies faith; and no one supposes that an insincere, careless, heartless confession will secure the salvation of any man. Thus also we are said to be saved by calling on the Lord, because invocation implies trust. In like manner we are said to be saved by baptism, because baptism implies faith. If this faith be wanting, baptism can do us no more good than a heartless confession. There is no more difficulty in understanding why the Scriptures should connect salvation with the use of the sacraments, than in understanding why they should connect the same blessing with invocation or confession. There is no difficulty in either case, if we allow the Scriptures to explain themselves, and interpret them as we explain all other writings.

Again, it is according to scriptural usage to ascribe to a sign the name and attributes of the

thing signified. Thus circumcision is called the covenant of God, because it was the sign of that covenant. Christ called the cup the new covenant; the wine he called his blood and the bread his body. Those who partake of the wine are, therefore, said to receive his blood, and of course the benefits which it purchased.

It is to be remembered, also, that the sacraments are seals, and that it is common to attribute to any ceremony, by which an engagement is ratified, the efficacy which belongs not to the ceremony, but to the engagement itself. The ceremonial of inauguration is said to induct a man into the office, the right to which it merely publicly declares and confirms. Even in the strict language of the law, a deed, with its signature and seal, is said to convey a right of property, although it is simply the evidence of the purpose of the original possessor. It is that purpose which conveys the right, and if it can be shown that the man who holds the deed was not the man intended by the grantor, the deed would be regarded as worthless. If a man deeds an estate to A, on the assumption that he is the son of B, should it be proved that A was not the son of B, the deed would convey to him no valid title. But the blessings of the Gospel are declared to be intended for penitent believers; the sacraments are he external means of recognising the conveyance

of these blessings; to those who are really what they profess to be, they do in fact convey and secure these blessings; to others they confer no such benefits. When an unbeliever receives these ordinances, he no more obtains a title to the blessings which they represent, than a man obtains a title to an estate by falsely assuming the name of the person for whom it is intended.

There is nothing, therefore, in the language of the Scriptures on this subject which is not perfectly consistent with the common protestant doctrine that the sacraments have no inherent efficacy of their own, but become efficacious means of grace to those who believe; the Holy Spirit thereby communicating to believers the blessings of which those ordinances are the significant representations.

SECTION III. *Obligation to attend upon the Sacraments Qualifications for the proper discharge of the duty.*

The obligation which rests upon all Christians to attend upon the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper, arises clearly from what has been shown to be their nature and design. We have seen that they are institutions appointed by Christ himself. He has commanded all his followers to be baptized and to commemorate his death, in a prescribed manner. As obedience to Christ is

necessary, so is a participation of these ordinances. As, however, it is a necessity arising out of a positive command, it is a qualified necessity, since such commands are not binding under all circumstances. It is impossible that a sinner should be saved without faith and repentance; but it is not impossible that he should be saved without the sacraments. As we are bound to keep the sabbath as part of our obedience to God, and yet may innocently labour on that day when necessity or mercy requires it; so although bound to present ourselves at the table of the Lord as an act of obedience, we may be innocently absent, whenever that absence is not the effect of a wilful or disobedient spirit. As, however, the command of Christ on this subject is express, the obligation which it imposes is of the strongest character.

In the second place, it has been shown that to confess Christ before men is an indispensable duty, and that the sacraments are the appointed means for making this confession; it follows, therefore. that attendance on the sacraments is also an indispensable duty. When in human governments the laws prescribe a particular mode in which we are to acknowledge allegiance to our country, it is not competent for us to neglect that mode; nor have we a right to adopt a different method of acknowledgment, or to suffer our allegiance to be inferred

from our conduct. If we wish to be recognised as citizens, we must in the prescribed form acknowledge ourselves such. And if Christ has prescribed a particular way in which he will be acknowledged by his followers, intelligently and wilfully to refuse obedience to his command, is to renounce our allegiance to him and to forfeit the benefits of his kingdom.

Again, as the sacraments are the seals of the covenant of grace, to reject these seals is to reject the covenant itself. It is not meant that they are in such a sense indispensable that if a man perform the conditions of the covenant, he will be excluded from its benefits, for the want of the seals. Among men, indeed, we often see that the want of the prescribed number of witnesses to a signature, the want of a seal, or even a clerical error in a document, is sufficient to set aside a solemn engagement. Nothing of this kind can occur under the government of God, where justice is never embarrassed by technical formalities. The apostle expressly teaches that as circumcision becomes uncircumcision, if the law be broken, so, on the other hand, if a man keep the law, his uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision. It is admitted, therefore, that if a man has the faith, repentance and obedience required by the gospel, his salvation is secure. But no man has a right to assume that he has this faith and

repentance, who neglects to obey the commands of Christ. The essential conditions of salvation have been the same under every dispensation. If any man, under the old economy, had the faith of Abraham, he was entitled to the blessings promised to Abraham. Nevertheless, as circumcision was the appointed means of expressing that faith, and of accepting the covenant of which it was the condition, it was expressly declared, that the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.* Is it not equally true that those who intelligibly and wilfully neglect baptism and the Lord's supper, break the covenant under which the church is now placed? It will not do for us to say, if we have the substance, the form is of little account. We all know that if an ancient Israelite had repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah, his sins were forgiven; and yet unless he expressed his faith by bringing the appointed sacrifice to the altar, he was not forgiven. God saw fit that the mode of pardon should be thus exhibited and recognised. In like manner he now requires that the method of salvation should be publicly acknowledged and set forth in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's

* Gen. xvii. 14.

supper. We do, therefore, as really reject the covenant of God by neglecting these ordinances, as did the Israelites who rejected circumcision or the offering of sacrifices.

Another illustration of this subject may be borrowed from the marriage contract. The essence of the covenant is the mutual consent of parties. But in all civilized countries some public manifestation of that consent is essential to the validity of the engagement. Thus, also, the essence of our covenant with God is repentance and faith; but baptism and the Lord's supper being the divinely appointed means of signifying and ratifying the engagement, they can no more be neglected than the public recognition of the marriage covenant.

It was a fatal perversion when the Jews imagined that circumcision and sacrifices without faith and obedience, were effectual to salvation, and it is no less a fatal delusion to imagine that baptism and the Lord's supper without those inward graces can secure the favour of God. But in avoiding one extreme, we must not run into the opposite. Though the ancient sacrifices without faith were an abomination to the Lord; the sacrifices were still, by divine appointment, necessary; and although the Christian ordinances, without the grace which they represent, are empty forms, they too by divine appointment are obligatory and, in their place, essential

No Christian, however, needs to be forced by stress of authority to yield obedience to the commands of Christ. It is enough for him that it is the will of his Saviour that the truths and blessings of the Gospel should be exhibited and commemorated by the perpetual observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Though he were unable to see any fitness in such observance, or though experience taught him nothing of its value, yet would he cheerfully obey. Much more may he be expected to yield a ready obedience, when he knows both from Scripture and experience, that these ordinances are made to the believer the channels of divine blessings; that they are means of grace and sources of the purest spiritual enjoyments; that they bring him into communion with Christ and unite him in holy fellowship with all his brethren. He knows that to neglect these divine institutions is not only to violate a command of God and to break his covenant; it is to refuse to be fed at his table and to reject the provision which he has made for the life of our souls.

If the sacraments are such important means of grace, and if attendance upon them is a duty so plainly enjoined in the word of God, it is important to enquire what are the proper qualifications for the acceptable discharge of this duty.

In considering this subject we must not confound

the qualifications which the church has a right to demand of those who present themselves as candidates for Christian communion, with those which such candidates are bound to seek in themselves. The church cannot judge the heart; she can only require a credible profession. It is her duty to explain the nature of the gospel, with its promises and commands, and to state clearly what is the nature of the service in which those engage, who profess to embrace the offers of salvation. Those who, when thus instructed, declare that they accept the offers of divine mercy, and purpose to live in obedience to the divine commands, she receives into communion, unless there be some tangible evidence of the insincerity of their professions. This she does, not because she judges them to be true Christians, but because they possess the qualifications which alone she has a right to demand. No priest under the old dispensation ever ventured to debar a man from the altar, because in his own mind, he might judge him to be destitute of the faith and penitence implied in the act of presenting a sacrifice. If the offerer had the external qualifications prescribed by the law, he was admitted. To Him who searches the heart, it was left to decide upon his spiritual state. Thus also, under the gospel dispensation, we find the apostles baptizing and admitting to the Lord's supper all who made the requisite

profession and against whom no visible evidence of insincerity could be produced. Whatever was considered a sufficient reason for excommunicating a church member, was of course regarded as sufficient to exclude an applicant for admission. It is of importance to remember that the church does not profess to believe all those to be true Christians, whom she admits to her communion. Of their inward sincerity she cannot judge; to their own master they must stand or fall. Many are no doubt confirmed in a false judgment of themselves, because they consider their admission to the church to be an expression of the judgment of their pastor. or brethren, that they are what they profess to be. It is natural for them to think well of themselves. when they consider experienced Christians as pronouncing a favourable judgment of their spiritual state. But they should remember that it is not the prerogative of the church to judge the heart; she must receive all who have the external qualifications which the Scriptures require.

But though the church is obliged to confine her demands to a credible profession of faith and repentance, it is the duty of those who seek admission to her communion, to see that they have all the qualifications which the nature of the service demands. These qualifications may all be reduced to knowledge and piety.

Did the Scriptures teach that the sacraments had an inherent efficacy of their own; that the water of baptism had power to wash away sin, and the bread and wine a virtue to sustain spiritual life, then indeed they might be administered to the ignorant, the insensible, or the dying. But if we are taught that the efficacy both of the word and ordinances depends not on them, nor on those who administer them, but on the Holy Spirit, revealing and applying the truth thereby exhibited, then it is plain that they must be understood in order to be beneficial. It is one of the most important doctrines of the Bible that God sanctifies his people through the truth. But truth is not truth to him who does not understand it. If you repeat to an ignorant man a mathematical formula, although it may contain a proposition of the highest value, to him it is nothing. It communicates no idea to his mind, and can produce no effect upon it. Or if you tell him that God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood; if he does not understand the meaning of the words, it is as though he never heard them. We, therefore, do not preach in an unknown tongue; nor do we send Hebrew Bibles to the Hindoos, or the Greek Scriptures to the Hottentots. Unless the truth is understood, it is not present to the mind, and cannot operate upon it. In like manner, unless the

sacraments are understood by those who receive them, they are, for them, an unmeaning ceremony. They either exhibit nothing, or they excite erroneous views and apprehensions. We degrade the Scriptures into formulas of incantation, and the sacraments into magical rites, if we suppose a knowledge of their meaning to be unnecessary. God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit—intelligently as well as sincerely and inwardly. It is, therefore, essential to a proper attendance on the sacraments that we should know what they are designed to represent. what benefits they confer and what obligations they impose. When they are thus understood; when the believer sees in them the clear exhibition of the truths and promises of the gospel, and knows that they were appointed to be the means of his confessing Christ before men, and to ratify the gracious covenant of God with his soul, he then really receives the spiritual blessings of which the sacraments are the outward signs.

The knowledge requisite to a proper understanding of the sacraments includes a knowledge of all the essential doctrines of the Gospel. When a man is baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, unless these sacred names represent to his mind some definite idea; unless he knows them to be the names of the persons of the

Godhead. he cannot know what he does in submitting to be baptized. He does not acknowledge Jehovah; nor does he receive him as his covenant God, Redeemer and Sanctifier. As baptism is designed to signify and seal our union with Christ, and our deliverance through him from the guilt and dominion of sin, unless we know ourselves to be sinners, and know that it is necessary for us to be united to Christ, and by his blood and Spirit, to be pardoned and renewed, the ordinance for us loses all its significancy. Thus a knowledge of the truth concerning God, concerning sin, atonement and regeneration is essential to a proper participation of this ordinance. And as the Lord's supper is intended to be a memorial of the death of Christ, unless we know who he was, why he died and what benefits his death secures, we are incapable of profitably joining in this service. All the affections must have an appropriate object. If we love, we love something; if we fear, we fear something; if we desire, we desire something. There can be neither faith, nor love, nor penitence, nor hope, nor gratitude, but as objects suited to these exercises are present to the mind; and the nature of these exercises depends upon the nature of the objects which call them forth. If they are excited by the truth, they are right and good; and just in proportion to the clearness with which the truth

is spiritually discerned, will be the purity and strength of the religious emotions. Knowledge, therefore, is essential to religion.

We must not suppose, however, that knowledge and learning are synonymous terms, or that all knowledge is derived from without, through the medium of the understanding. Very far from it. A large part of our knowledge is derived from our own consciousness or inward experience. The same external revelation may be presented to two equally intelligent men ; if the one is made, by the Spirit of God, to feel in accordance with the truth, and the other is destitute of such feelings, the former will possess a knowledge of which the latter has no conception. He will have an insight into the nature of the things revealed, and into their truth and value, which is due entirely to what passes within his own bosom. These men, although they may be equal in learning, will differ greatly in knowledge. We accordingly find that the ignorant, among God's people, have often far more knowledge of religious truth, than many learned men. They have more correct views of its nature ; and the words by which it is expressed excite in their minds far more definite conceptions of the real objects of the religious affections. As, however, God does not reveal new truths, but sanctifies his people by his word, there must be external instruc-

tion in order to this inward spiritual knowledge · hence ignorance of the truths revealed in the Scriptures, as it is inconsistent with the existence of right religious feeling, or in other words, with religion itself, so it is inconsistent with the proper participation of those ordinances by which those truths are set forth and confirmed.

The other qualifications for an acceptable participation of the sacraments are naturally suggested by the view given of their nature. As they are the appointed means for making a public profession of religion, it is of course requisite that we should be and believe what we therein profess. The substance of this profession is that we are Christians; that we believe in Christ as the Redeemer of sinners; that we accept of the terms of salvation proposed in the Gospel and purpose to live in obedience to its commands. If we have not this faith; if we do not thus purpose to renounce our sins and live unto God, then do we make a false profession, and our service must be unacceptable to God.

Viewing the sacraments as seals of the covenant of grace, it is plain that they require the qualifications just mentioned in those who receive them. That covenant relates to deliverance from sin. God therein engages to grant us salvation; and we engage to accept of his mercy on the terms on which it is offered. If he promises to be our God; we

promise to be his people. But how can those who love sin and are determined not to forsake it, enter into this solemn engagement with God? How can those who have no sense of their need of pardon, no desire for holiness, no sorrow for past transgressions, thus covenant with God for forgiveness, sanctification and eternal life?

With regard to the Lord's supper we are taught that it was specially designed to be a memorial of Christ's death. If we join in celebrating his death, we profess to believe not only that he died, but that he was all that he claimed to be; that his death secures the benefits which the Scriptures attribute to it; and that we are bound to aid in keeping this great event in perpetual remembrance. The proper discharge of this duty requires that we should have a due sense of our obligations to Christ for having loved us and given himself for us. It requires that we should reverence and love him in some measure in proportion to his excellence and the value of the blessings which we receive from him. It requires that we should be prepared to own him, who by wicked hands was crucified and slain, as our Lord and Saviour, and as such to obey and trust him.

In whatever light, therefore, the sacraments are viewed, whether as the means of publicly confessing Christ, or as signs and seals of spiritual blessings, or as commemorative of the work of redemp

tion, no man can profitably, or acceptably attend upon them, without adequate knowledge of their nature, without faith in the truths which they represent and confirm, or without the penitence, gratitude and love which those truths, when really believed, necessarily produce. Where this knowledge, faith and love are found, there are the requisite qualifications for acceptable attendance on the sacraments; where they are wanting, such attendance must include false professions and insincere promises.

We must not, however, suppose that the want of these qualifications frees us from the obligation to obey the command of Christ to be baptized and to commemorate his death. We are certainly bound to worship God though destitute of the reverence faith and love which such worship requires; and the plea of unfitness for the service cannot justify us in absenting ourselves from the ordinances which Christ has appointed. If we fear to assume the responsibility of a public profession of religion, we should remember that we make such profession every time we join in the public worship of the sanctuary. If we say we should offend God by approaching his table, without due preparation, let us remember that we offend him every time we pray, or hear the gospel without faith, penitence and obedience. It is in vain to attempt to introduce

consistency into a half religious life. If men will renounce all claim to be of the number of God's people, and reject his service entirely, they may so far be consistent. But they cannot choose one part of his service and reject another; they cannot profess to be penitent and believing by joining in the worship of God, and declare themselves impenitent and unbelieving by absenting themselves from the sacraments. They do not place themselves on neutral ground by such inconsistency. Their only safe and proper course is to repent and believe. Then will they be acceptable worshippers and acceptable communicants. If they frequent the temple of God with a sincere desire to do his will, and seek his favour, let them, in the same state of mind, obey all his commands. If they come to the Lord's table to please Christ, to obey his will, to express their gratitude for his death, let them come. As their day is, so shall their strength be.

From the review of this whole subject, it is clear that the public confession of Christ is an indispensable condition of discipleship; that this confession must be made by attending on the ordinances which he has appointed; that these ordinances are not only the signs and seals of spiritual blessings, but are made, by the Holy Spirit, to the believer, effectual means of grace; that attendance upon them is, therefore, an indispensable duty, requiring no other

qualifications than such as are necessary for the acceptable worship of God; and, consequently that it is incumbent on all those who sincerely desire to serve and honour Christ, and to partake of his salvation, to receive the sacraments, in obedience to his will.

CHAPTER IX

HOLY LIVING.

SECTION I. *The nature of true religion.*

IT is natural that those who have experienced the agitations which frequently attend upon conversion, and have felt the peace which flows from a hope of acceptance with God, to imagine that the conflict is over; the victory won, and the work of religion accomplished. This imagination is soon dissipated. Birth is not the whole of life; neither is conversion the whole of religion. A young mother may, in the fulness of her joy, forget for a moment that her vocation as a mother is but just begun; but when she looks upon her infant, so wonderful in its organization and instinct with an immortal spirit, the sight of its helplessness makes her feel how great a work she has still to do. An hour's neglect might prove the ruin of her hopes. Thus the young Christian, although at first disposed to think that his work is finished, soon finds that the feeble prin

ciple of spiritual life needs to be watched and nourished with ceaseless care. If abandoned at its birth, it must perish as certainly and as speedily as an exposed infant.

Another mistake on this subject is made by those who suppose that religion is a fitful sort of life; an alternation of excitement and insensibility. Those who labour under this delusion, are religious only on certain occasions. They live contentedly for months in unconcern, and then, if they can be moved to tenderness or joy, they are satisfied with the prospect of another period of collapse. No form of life is thus intermittent. Neither plants nor animals thus live. Men do not, when in health, pass from convulsions to fainting, and from fainting to convulsions; nor does religion, when genuine, ever assume this form. It has, indeed, its alternations, as there are periods of health and sickness, of vigour and lassitude in the animal frame; but just so far as it deserves the name of religion, it is steady, active and progressive; and not a series of spasms.

It is a still more common error to suppose that religion is rather an external than an internal service. There are multitudes who consider themselves to be religious, because they attend upon religious services; who suppose that a regular attendance upon public worship, and the outward forms of

religion is enough to entitle them to the character of Christians.

The Scriptures teach us that religion is a new, spiritual life. Its commencement is, therefore, called a new birth, a creation, a spiritual resurrection. It is, as to its principle or source, mysterious. No man can tell what life is. He sees its different forms in vegetables, animals, and in the rational soul, but he cannot detect the secret spring of these different kinds of activity. The nature of spiritual life is not less inscrutable. The wind bloweth where it listeth; ye hear the sound thereof, but ye cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. A new kind of activity manifests itself in the soul that is born of God; but whence that activity springs, and how it is maintained, are among the secret things of God. We cannot doubt, however, that there is some permanent cause of those new exercises. We know that the life of the body does not consist in the acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, &c.; nor does the soul consist of thought and volition; neither does spiritual life consist in the acts which manifest its existence. There is in regeneration a change effected in the state of the soul which accounts for its perceptions, purposes and feelings being different from what they were before, and for their so continuing. The cause of this differ

ence is sometimes called a new heart, or grace, or the spirit, or the new man, or the renewal of the inner man. All these terms are used to designate the principle of spiritual life, which manifests itself in the fruits of holiness. It is called life because it is thus permanent, or abiding. Those who for a time manifest a degree of ardour and activity in relation to religion and then lose all interest in the subject, are like dead bodies on which electricity may for a while produce some of the appearances of animation, but which soon become insensible to all means of excitement. In such cases there is no principle of life. Where religion is genuine, it has its root in a new heart and is, therefore, permanent.

It is moreover characteristic of the life of sentient and rational creatures, to be spontaneous in its exercises. There are certain acts to which it prompts and in which it delights. It is not by constraint that animals eat, or drink, or sport in the consciousness of strength; neither is it by compulsion that men exercise their minds in the reception and communication of ideas and the reciprocation of feeling. To be so isolated from their fellow beings as to be prevented from giving vent to the force of intellectual and social life, is the severest of all condemnations. In like manner reverence, gratitude, love, submission, are the spontaneous

exercises of the renewed heart. They are the free, unbidden, unconstrained effusions of the soul. That religion which is reluctant, or forced, whether by fear or stress of conscience, is spurious. Filial obedience, if rendered from a dread of punishment, or from mere regard to appearances, is very different from that which flows from respect and love; and unless the service which we render to God flows unbidden from the heart, it is no evidence that we are his children. The Bible represents the people of God as delighting in the things of God. His word, his ordinances, his sanctuary, his presence are their chief joy. When a man is ill, he takes little pleasure in the ordinary sources of enjoyment, and when the Christian is in a declining state, he knows little of the joy which belongs to religion. Still whatever there is of spiritual life in any soul, will manifest itself in spontaneous exercises of piety.

Again, life, in all the forms in which we are acquainted with it, is progressive; feeble at the beginning, it advances gradually to maturity. It is thus in plants, in animals, and in the rational soul; and it is thus also in the spiritual life. There is a joy which attends the beginning of a religious life, which very often declines; a fact which may lead even the true Christian to think that religion itself is declining in his heart. Such joy, however, is a

very uncertain criterion of the progress or decline of the spiritual life. The gambols of young animals show an exuberance of joy, which those that have reached maturity no longer experience. But how imperfect is the organization of these playful creatures, how small is their power of endurance, how little their serviceable strength, in comparison with that of those who know not half their joys. It is not unnatural, therefore, that young Christians should feel a glow of happiness from the exercise of feelings, delightful from their novelty as well as from their nature, which those more advanced may have ceased to experience, in whom feeling has ripened into principle, and mere joyful emotions settled into a peace which passes all understanding.

Though joy is not the proper criterion of progress in the divine life, it is as essential to its nature to be progressive, as it is to the life of the body to increase in stature as it advances from childhood to maturity, or to that of the mind to gather strength in its progress from infancy to manhood. A man with the mind of an infant is an idiot; he is destitute of what belongs to a rational being. And a Christian, who makes no progress in holiness, must be essentially defective. The surest evidence of such progress is increase of strength; strength of faith; strength of purpose; strength of principle; strength to do right, to resist evil, and to endure

suffering. The people of God go from strength to strength, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

True religion, then, is not an external service nor is it a mere excitement of fear and sorrow succeeded by peace and joy; nor is it a fitful alternation of such exercises. It is a permanent principle of action, spontaneous in its exercises and progressive in its nature. These attributes, are essential to its genuineness, but they do not constitute its whole character. It is a participation of the divine nature,* or the conformity of the soul to God. It is described as the putting off the old man with his deeds and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;† or a being renewed in the spirit of our mind, that we may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.‡ These two passages express the same truth. To be renewed in knowledge, or rather, unto knowledge, means to be renewed so as to know; and knowledge includes the perception, recognition and approbation of what is true and good. This comprehensive sense of the word is not unusual in the Scriptures; and hence it is said, that to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life. Such knowledge

* 2 Pet. i. 4. † Col. iii. 10. ‡ Eph. iv. 24

is the life of the soul; it is conformity to God in the perception and approbation of truth. No higher conception of moral excellence can be formed than that which resolves it into the harmony of the soul with God in judgment and will. This is what in the parallel passage, the apostle calls righteousness and holiness of truth, (that is, founded upon, or arising from truth.) The same idea of sanctification is presented in Rom. xii. 2, when it is said, Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove (or, approve) what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. This is true religion, to approve what God approves, to hate what he hates, and to delight in what delights him.

It is obvious from this representation that the whole man is the subject of this change. There are new perceptions, new purposes and new feelings. The mind becomes more and more enlightened, the will more submissive to the rule of right, and the affections more thoroughly purified. The apostle in his epistle to the Thessalonians says, The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The body is the subject of sancti

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

fication in various ways It is the temple of the Holy Ghost,* and is, therefore, holy as consecrated to the service, and hallowed by the presence of God. Our bodies are also members of Jesus Christ, and in virtue of this union, they partake of the benefits of redemption, and are hereafter to be fashioned like unto his glorious body. And still further, the influence of the body upon the soul is so manifold, for good or evil, and, in our fallen state, so predominantly for evil, that no small part of the work of sanctification consists in counteracting that influence. Paul says of himself, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.† And he declares it to be one of the conditions of life, that believers should, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body.‡ The body, therefore, is sanctified not only by redeeming it from the service of sin and consecrating it to the service of God, but also by restraining its power over the soul, making it temperate in its demands and submissive to the will of the renewed man.

As the work of sanctification extends to all our faculties, so the image of God which it is designed to impress upon the soul, includes all moral excel-

* 1 Cor. vi. 19. † 1 Cor. ix. 27. ‡ Rom. viii. 13.

lence. The different graces, such as love, faith, meekness, kindness, &c., are but different manifestations of one and the same principle of goodness. Not that justice and benevolence are the same sentiment or disposition, for they are distinct; but the same principle which makes a man just, will make him benevolent. Religion, or the principle of divine life, prompts to all kinds of excellence; and, in itself, as much to one as to another; just as the principle of life, in plants and animals and in the rational soul, leads to a harmonious development of the whole in all its parts. The root increases as the branches enlarge; the body grows as the several members increase in size; and judgment and memory gain strength as the other powers of the mind increase in vigour. Every thing depends upon this harmonious progress. If the arms retained their infantile proportions, while the rest of the body advanced to maturity, deformity and helplessness would be the result. Or if judgment and feeling gained their full force, while memory and conscience remained as in infancy, the mind would be completely deranged. The same law of symmetrical development is impressed upon the life of the soul. If it exists at all, it manifests itself in all the forms of goodness. There may be some kinds of excellence, where others are absent; but then such excellence has not its source in the

divine life; or in a new heart; for that, in its very nature, includes all moral excellence. We feel it to be a contradiction to say that he is a good man, who though just, is unkind; because goodness includes both justice and benevolence. And it is no less a contradiction to say that a man is religious who is not honest, because religion includes honesty as well as piety. It is not simply intended that the word religion comprehends and expresses all forms of moral excellence, but that the thing meant by religion, or the new man, the principle of grace or of divine life in the heart, includes within itself all kinds of goodness. Reverence, love, submission, justice, benevolence, are but different exercises of one and the same principle of holiness. There can be no holiness without benevolence, none without reverence, none without justice. The man, therefore, who is renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of God, is one who has that moral excellence which expresses itself, according to its different objects and occasions, in all the various graces of the Spirit.

The Scriptures give especial prominence to the love of God as the most comprehensive and important of all the manifestations of this inward spiritual life. We are so constituted as to take delight in objects suited to our nature; and the perception of qualities adapted to our constitution, in

external objects, produces complacency and desire. The soul rests in them as a good to be loved for its own sake; and the higher these qualities, the more pure and elevated are the affections which they excite. It is the effect of regeneration to enable us to perceive and love the infinite and absolute perfection of God, as comprehending all kinds of excellence, and as suited to the highest powers and most enlarged capacities of our nature. As soon, therefore, as the heart is renewed it turns to God, and rests in his excellence as the supreme object of complacency and desire.

Love to God, however, is not mere complacency in moral excellence. It is the love of a personal being, who stands in the most intimate relations to ourselves, as the author of our existence, as our preserver and ruler, as our father, who with conscious love watches over us, protects us, supplies all our wants, holds communion with us, manifesting himself unto us as he does not unto the world. The feelings of dependence, obligation and relationship, enter largely into that comprehensive affection called the love of God. This affection is still further modified by the apprehension of the infinite wisdom and power of its object. These attributes are the proper object of admiration; and, when infinite in degree and united with infinite goodness, they excite that wonder, admiration,

reverence and complacency which constitute adoration, and which find in prostration and worship their only adequate expression. There is no attribute of religion more essential to its nature than this reverence for God. Whenever heaven has been opened to the view of men, its inhabitants have been seen with their faces veiled and bowing before the throne of God. And all acceptable worship upon earth, proceeds from the humble and contrite who tremble at his word.

The exercise of these feelings of reverence and love is either, (so to speak,) casual, as the thoughts of God pass and repass through the soul during the busy hours of the day; or it is more prolonged, when the soul withdraws from the world, and sets itself in the presence of God, to adore his excellence, to thank him for his goodness, and to supplicate his blessing. The spirit of devotion which so pre-eminently distinguished the Redeemer, dwells in all his people. They are all devout; they all walk with God; they all feel him to be near and rejoice in his presence; and they all have communion with him in acts of private and public worship. There is no religion without this intercourse of the soul with God, as there is no life without warmth and motion in the body. And as the body rapidly decays when dead; so the soul perishes when not in communion with God.

This love of God will manifest itself in submission and obedience. The former is an humble acquiescence in the will of God, including the perception and acknowledgment that the commands of God concerning all things are right, and that his dispensations are all wise, merciful and just. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, religion forces upon us the conviction that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. The renewed soul filled with the assurance of the wisdom, power and goodness of God, resigns itself into his hands, saying, THY WILL BE DONE. When under the influence of this spirit, it is free from the discontent and misgivings which destroy the peace and aggravate the guilt of those who have no such confidence that the judge of all the earth will do right.

Love to God must produce obedience, because it supposes a conformity of the soul to God in the perception and love of what is true and right; and obedience is only the expression or outward manifestation of this conformity; just as disobedience is the evidence of a contrariety between our will and the will of God. Wherever there is reconciliation to God, or the restoration of the divine image, there must be conformity of heart and life to the will of God. It is a contradiction to say that a man is like God, or is a partaker of his nature, who does not

love what God loves, and avoid what he hates. Obedience is but love in action. It is but the voice, and look, and carriage which affection, of necessity, assumes. For the love of God is not, as already said, mere love to excellence; it is the love of a heavenly Father; and, therefore, it secures obedience, not only because it supposes a congeniality of mind, if we may so speak, between the people of God and God himself, but also because it is his will that we should be obedient; it is what is pleasing to him; and love is no longer love if it does not lead to the purpose and endeavour to give pleasure to its object. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, said our Saviour, he it is that loveth me. Obedience is not so much the evidence of love, as it is love itself made visible, or expressed. The habitual tenor of a man's life gives a more faithful exhibition of his state of heart, than any occasional ebullition of feeling, or any mere verbal professions; and where the tenor of the life is not in conformity with the will of God, there the heart must be in opposition to that will; and on the other hand, wherever there is love, there must be obedience.

It would be out of analogy with the order of things as established by God, if the exercises of the spiritual life were not attended by peace and joy Happiness is so intimately associated with these

exercises that the apostle says, To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Excellence and enjoyment are blended in inseparable union; so that all right emotions and affections are pleasurable. And this pleasure is, in kind if not in degree, proportionable to the dignity of the powers from whose exercise they flow. The senses afford the lowest kind of happiness; then, in an ascending scale, the social affections; then the intellectual powers; then the moral emotions, and then the religious affections. The kind of enjoyment which attend these latter is felt to be more pure and elevated, more satisfying and better suited to our nature, than that which flows from any other source. Hence the Scriptures ascribe to communion with God a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and a peace which passes all understanding. Joy, therefore, is one of the fruits of the Spirit; it is one of the accompaniments and evidences of spiritual life; it is a healthful affusion; it is the oil of gladness, which the Spirit pours over the renewed soul, to invigorate its exercises, to brighten its visage, and to make it active in the service and praise of God.

As the image of God, after which the soul is renewed, consists in moral excellence, and as moral excellence means that state of mind, which causes a man to feel and act right under all circumstances, it is impossible that those who have correct views

and feelings in regard to God, should not feel and act correctly in regard to their fellow-men. Those whom the Bible designates as good men are benevolent and just no less than devout. The comprehensive statement of our duty towards our fellow-men, is found in the command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The love here intended is that disposition which leads us to regard our neighbour with respect and kindness, and to seek to do him good. This love is long-suffering and kind; it does not envy the happiness of others but rejoices in their welfare. It is not proud, nor does it behave itself unseemly. It seeketh not its own. It rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. It beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things. Without this love, all professions of piety, all gifts, all outward acts of self-denial or charity, are worthless. It belongs essentially to the Christian character; for as self-love, prompting us to the pursuit of our own happiness, belongs to our nature as men, so benevolence, prompting us to seek the happiness of others, belongs to the nature of the new man. A new man means a good man, one who is like God, holy, just, benevolent and merciful.

This meek, kind, trustful temper, which religion never fails to produce, is, of course, variously modified by the various characters of individuals. and by the relations of life. It is no part of the

teaching of the Bible that we must regard all men with the same feelings. While it inculcates benevolence towards all men, it makes provision for the peculiar and closer relations in which men stand to each other, as members of one family, or one society. And the same principle of religion which produces this general benevolence, secures the exercise of all the affections which belong to the various relations of life. It causes us to render obedience to whom obedience is due, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. It makes men in their intercourse with their equals respectful, considerate and amiable; in their conduct to their inferiors condescending, just and kind.

It cannot be too well considered that these social virtues are essential to true religion. The people of God are those who are like God; but God, as we have seen, is just, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth. Those, therefore, who are dishonest, unkind, proud, revengeful, or deceitful, are not his people; they do not bear the heavenly image, and have never been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Let no man deceive himself with the hope that though a bad parent, child, or neighbour, he may be a good Christian. A Christian is like Christ.

Another form in which a renewed heart cannot fail to manifest itself is in self-denial. If any man

will come after me, said the Saviour, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The necessity of self-denial arises partly from the fact that the gratification of our own wishes is often inconsistent with the good of others; and partly from the fact that so many of our desires and passions are inordinate or evil. The rule prescribed by the gospel is, that we are not to please ourselves, but every one must please his neighbour, for good to edification, even as Christ pleased not himself, but though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

The daily intercourse of life furnishes constant occasion for the exercise of this kind of self-denial. He who has the same mind that was in Christ, instead of being selfish, is ready to defer his own advantage to that of others, to give up his own gratification, and even his own rights for the good of others. If meat causes his brother to offend, he will not eat meat while the world lasts. To the Jews, he becomes as a Jew, that he may gain the Jews. To the weak, he becomes as weak, that he may gain the weak. He does not live for himself. His own interest is not the main end of his pursuit. As a disinterested regard for the good of others pre-eminently distinguished the Redeemer, it characterises all his followers; for God has predesti

nated them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

The call for self-denial arising from the corruption of our nature, is still more frequent. In consequence of the fall, the senses have attained an undue influence over the soul; they are incessant in their demands, and become more importunate the more they are indulged. It is inconsistent with reason to yield ourselves to the power of these lower principles of our nature; for reason itself teaches us that if a man is governed by his body, he is the servant of a slave. But if even a rational man feels bound to subject the body to the mind, the religious man cannot be sensual. They that are Christians have mortified the flesh with its affections and lusts; they keep their bodies in subjection.

What belongs to the body is, in a certain sense, external; the evil dispositions of the heart are in more intimate connection with the soul. Pride, vanity, envy, malice, the love of self are more formidable foes than mere bodily appetites. They are stronger, more enduring, and more capable of deceit. As these dispositions are deeply seated in our nature, the putting off the old man, which is corrupt, or the destruction of these unholy principles, is the most difficult of all Christian duties, and renders the believer's life a perpetual conflict.

The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that he cannot do the things that he would. In this conflict, however, the better principle is habitually, though not uniformly, victorious; for the children of God walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

It appears, then, even from this short survey, that true Christians are renewed after the image of God so as to be holy; they love God, they rest with complacency on his perfections, they acquiesce in his will, and rejoice in their relation to him as his creatures and children. They are habitually devout and have fellowship with the Father of their spirits and with Jesus Christ his Son. They are obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to their former lusts, but as he that called them is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conversation. As they bear the image of a just and merciful God, they are honest and benevolent towards their fellow-men, not seeking their own, but the good of others. And as this victory over themselves and this conformity to the image of God cannot be obtained without conflict and self-denial, they keep up a constant opposition to the more subtle evils of the heart.

Some may be ready to say that if this is religion, then no man is religious. It is certainly true that many are called, and few chosen. Strait is the

gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. We must take our idea of religion from the Bible, and not from the lives of professors. It cannot be denied that the Bible makes religion to consist in love to God and man; nor can it be questioned that the love of God will manifest itself in reverence, devotion and obedience, and the love of men in benevolence and justice. And our own conscience tells us that no external forms, no outward professions, no assiduity in religious services, can entitle us to the character of Christians, unless we are thus devout and obedient towards God, thus just and benevolent towards our fellow-men, and thus pure and self-denying as regards ourselves. But while it is certain that these traits are all essential to the Christian character, it is not asserted that all Christians are alike. There is as great diversity in their characters as Christians, as in their bodily appearance, their mental powers, or social dispositions. But as all men, in the midst of this endless variety, have the same features, the same mental faculties, and the same social affections, so all Christians, however they may differ in the strength or combination of the Christian graces, are all led by the Spirit and all produce the fruits of the Spirit.

Having given this brief outline of the nature of true religion, it is proper to say a few words as to

its necessity It should be ever borne in mind that the necessity of holiness is absolute. With regard to other things, some, though desirable, are not essential, and others, though essential under ordinary circumstances, are not universally and absolutely necessary. But holiness is necessary in such a sense that salvation, without it, is impossible, because salvation principally consists in this very transformation of the heart. Jesus is a Saviour because he saves his people from their sins. Those, therefore, who are not sanctified, are not saved. The doctrine that a man may live in sin, and still be in a state of salvation, is as much a contradiction, as to say that a man may be ill, when in health. A state of salvation is a state of holiness. The two things are inseparable; because salvation is not mere redemption from the penalty of sin, but deliverance from its power. It is freedom from bondage to the appetites of the body and the evil passions of the heart; it is an introduction into the favour and fellowship of God; the restoration of the divine image to the soul, so that it loves God and delights in his service. Salvation, therefore, is always begun on earth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath eternal life. This is the language of our Saviour. To be spiritually minded is life; to be carnally minded is death. There is no delusion more inexcusable, because none is more

directly opposed to every doctrine of the Bible, than the idea that a state of grace is consistent with a life of sin. Without holiness no man can see God. Whatever our ecclesiastical connexions may be, whatever our privileges or professions, if we are not holy in heart and life; if we are not habitually governed by a regard to the will of God; if we do not delight in communion with him, and desire conformity to his image; if we are not led by the Spirit and do not exhibit the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance which that Spirit always produces—then we are not religious men, nor are we in a state of salvation.

The Bible knows nothing of proud, selfish, covetous, impure Christians. Christians are partakers of a holy calling, they are washed, and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; they are saints, the sanctified in Christ Jesus; they mind spiritual things; they have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; they are poor in spirit meek, pure in heart, merciful; they hunger and thirst after righteousness. Not that they have already apprehended, or are already perfect; but they follow after, if that they may apprehend that for which they are also apprehended of Christ Jesus; forgetting the things that are behind, and

reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Their conversation is in heaven; from whence also they look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Again, as God is holy, it is necessary that his people should be holy. There can be no communion without concord, or congeniality. If one loves what another hates, approves what another condemns, desires what another rejects, there can be no fellowship between them. What concord hath Christ with Belial; or what fellowship hath light with darkness? So long, therefore, as we are what God disapproves; so long as we do not love what he loves, there can be no fellowship between him and us. Hence Christ says, Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and so long as this prevails it is impossible that we should enjoy his presence. As God is the only adequate portion of the soul; as his favour and fellowship are essential to our happiness; as heaven consists in seeing, loving and

serving God, it is plain that unless we are sanctified we cannot be saved; we cannot enjoy the society, the employments, or the pleasures of the people of God above, if we take no delight in them here. The necessity of holiness, therefore, arises out of the very nature of God, and is consequently absolute and unchangeable.

We know also that holiness is the end of redemption. Christ gave himself for his church that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and that it should be holy and without blemish. He died the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God. The object of redemption is not attained in the case of those who remain in sin; in other words, they are not redeemed. It is, therefore, to subvert the whole Gospel, and to make the death of Christ of none effect, to suppose that redemption and continuance in sin are compatible. The whole design and purpose of the mission and sufferings of the Saviour would be frustrated if his people were not made partakers of his holiness; for the glory of God is promoted in them and by them only so far as they are made holy, and the recompense of the Redeemer is his bringing his people into conformity to his own image, that he may be the first-born among many brethren. Every child of God feels that the charm and glory of redemption is deliverance from sin and conformity to God. This is the

crown of righteousness, the prize of the high calling of God, the exaltation and blessedness for which he longs, and suffers and prays. To tell him that he may be saved without being made holy, is to confound all his ideas of salvation, and to crush all his hopes. The nature of salvation, the character of God, the declarations of his word, the design of redemption, all concur to prove that holiness is absolutely and indispensably necessary, so that whatever we may be, or whatever we may have, if we are not holy, we are not the children of God nor the heirs of his kingdom.

Section II. *The means of sanctification.*

The attainment of holiness is often treated, even by Christian writers, as a mere question of morals, or at most of natural religion. Men are directed to control, by the force of reason, their vicious propensities; to set in array before the mind the motives to virtuous living, and to strengthen the will by acts of self-restraint. Conscience is summoned to sanction the dictates of reason, or to warn the sinner of the consequences of transgression. The doctrines of the presence and providence of God, and of future retribution, are more or less relied upon to prevent the indulgence of sin, and to stimulate to the practice of virtue. Special directions

are given how to cultivate virtuous habits, or to correct those which are evil.

As we are rational beings and were meant to be governed by reason in opposition to appetite and passion, there is much that is true and important in such disquisitions on the practice of virtue. But as we are depraved beings, destitute of any recuperative power in ourselves, such rules and the efforts to which they lead, must, by themselves, be ineffectual. God has endowed the body with a restorative energy, which enables it to throw off what is noxious to the system, and to heal the wounds, which accident or malice may have inflicted. But when the system itself is deranged, instead of correcting what is amiss, it aggravates what would, otherwise, be a mere temporary disorder. And if by external means the evil is checked in one part, it re-appears in another. Though you amputate a decaying limb, the remaining portion may soon exhibit symptoms of mortification. So long as the system is deranged such means are mere palliatives, concealing or diverting the evil, but leaving the source of it untouched. It is no less true that so long as the heart is unrenewed, all that reason and conscience can do is of little avail. They may obstruct the stream, or divert it into secret channels, but they cannot reach the fountain. As we retain since the fall,

reason, the power of choice, conscience, the social affections, a sense of justice, fear, shame, &c., much may be done, by a skilful management of these principles of action, towards producing propriety of conduct and even great amiability and worth of character. But it is impossible, by these means, to call into existence right views and feelings towards God and our neighbour, or to eradicate the selfishness, pride and other forms of evil by which our nature is corrupted. A man may be brought, by reason and conscience, to change his conduct, but not to change his heart. A sense of duty may force him to give alms to a man he hates, but it cannot change hatred into love. The desire of happiness may induce him to engage externally in the service of God, but it cannot make that service a delight. The affections do not obey the dictates of reason, nor the commands of conscience. They may be measurably restrained in their manifestations, but cannot be changed in their nature. They follow their own law. They delight in what is suited to the disposition of him who exercises them. Holding up to them what they ought to delight in, cannot secure their devotion.

It is not meant to depreciate reason and conscience, but it is necessary that their true province should be known, that we may not rely upon inadequate means in our efforts to become holy. Though

Scripture and experience teach us that our own unaided powers are insufficient to bring us to the knowledge and love of God, the rules which reason suggests for the culture of moral excellence, are, for the renewed man, far from being destitute of value. It is no doubt of importance that we should be acquainted with the counsels of the wise on this subject, and that we should habituate ourselves to the vigilant use of all these subordinate means of improvement; remembering, however, that it is not by the strength of our own purposes, nor by the force of moral considerations, nor by any rules of discipline, that the life of God in the soul can be either produced or sustained.

While one class of men place their chief reliance for moral improvement upon reason and conscience, another, and perhaps a larger class, rely upon means which, though they have no tendency in themselves to produce holiness, are falsely assumed to have, in virtue of the appointment of God, an inherent efficacy for that purpose. Such are not only the ablutions, pilgrimages and penances of the heathen, but the multiplied rites of corrupt Christian churches. Sprinkling the body with consecrated water, the repetition of forms of prayer attendance upon religious services not understood, anointing with oil, the imposition of hands, receiving, though without faith, the holy sacraments, are sup

posed to convey grace to the soul. Great reliance is placed on retirement from the world; on praying at particular times or places, or in a particular posture, and on the whole routine of ascetic discipline. With what laborious and unavailing diligence these means of destroying sin have been employed, the history of the church gives melancholy evidence. Even in the days of the apostles the disposition to rely on such means for attaining holiness had begun to manifest itself. There were even then men who commanded to abstain from meats, who forbade marriage, who said, taste not, touch not, handle not; which things, says the apostle, have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and in neglecting and dishonouring the body, and yet only served to satisfy the flesh.*

The Scriptures teach us a different doctrine. They teach that believers are so united to Christ, that they are not only partakers of the merit of his death, but also of his Holy Spirit, which dwells in them as a principle of life, bringing them more and more into conformity with the image of God, and working in them both to will and to do, according to his own good pleasure. They teach that so long as men are under the law, that is, are bound to

* Col. ii. 21—23

satisfy its demands as the ground of their acceptance with God and are governed by a legal spirit, or a mere sense of duty and fear of punishment, they are in the condition of slaves; incapable of right feelings towards God, or of producing the fruits of holiness. But when, by the death of Christ, they are freed from the law, in the sense above stated, their whole relation to God is changed. They are no longer slaves, but children. Being united to Christ in his death, they are partakers of his life, and in virtue of this union they bring forth fruit unto God. They are henceforth led by the Spirit which dwells in them; and this Spirit is a source of life not only to the soul but also to the body; for if the Spirit of him that raised Christ from the dead, dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in us. The doctrine of sanctification, therefore, as taught in the Bible is, that we are made holy not by the force of conscience, nor of moral motives, nor by acts of discipline, but by being united to Christ so as to become reconciled to God, and partakers of the Holy Ghost. Christ is made unto us sanctification as well as justification. He not only frees from the penalty of the law, but he makes holy. There is, therefore, according to the gospel, no such thing as sanctification, without or before justification. Those who

are out of Christ are under the power, as well as under the condemnation of sin. And those who are in Christ are not only free from condemnation, but are also delivered from the dominion of sin.

The nature of the union between Christ and his people, on which so much depends, is confessedly mysterious. Paul having said, We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, immediately adds, This is a great mystery.* It is in vain, therefore, to attempt to bring this subject down to the level of our comprehension. The mode in which God is present and operates throughout the universe, is to us an impenetrable secret. We cannot even understand how our own souls are present and operate in the bodies which they occupy. We need not, then, expect to comprehend the mode in which Christ dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people. The fact that such union exists is clearly revealed; its effects are explicitly stated, and its nature is set forth as far as it can be made known by the most striking illustrations. In his intercessory prayer, our Saviour said, I pray — that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. — I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.† He that keepeth his com-

* Eph. v. 32. † John xvii. 21—23.

mandments, says the apostle, dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit, which he hath given us.* If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, but if Christ be in you, the body, (adds the apostle,) may die, but the soul shall live.† Know ye not, asks Paul, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?‡ And to the same effect, Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?§

The Scriptures are filled with this doctrine The great promise of the Old Testament in connexion with the advent of the Messiah was, that the Holy Spirit should then be abundantly communicated to men. Christ is said to have redeemed us in order that we might receive this promised Spirit ‖ And the only evidence of a participation of the benefits of redemption, recognized by the apostles, was the participation of the Holy Ghost, manifesting itself either in the extraordinary powers which he then communicated, or in those lovely fruits of holiness which never fail to mark his presence

The effects ascribed to this union, as already

* 1 John iii. 24. † Rom. viii. 9—11
‡ 1 Cor vi 19. § 1 Cor. iii. 16
‖ Gal. iii. 13, 14.

stated, are an interest in the merits of Christ, in order to our justification, and the indwelling of his Spirit in order to our sanctification. Its nature is variously illustrated. It is compared to that union which subsists between a representative and those for whom he acts. In this view Adam is said to be like Christ and Christ is said to be the second Adam; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. This idea is also presented whenever Christ is said to have died for his sheep, or in their place; or when they are said to have died with him, his death being virtually their death, satisfying in their behalf the demands of justice and redeeming them from the curse of the law. It is compared to the union between the head and members of the same body. The meaning of this illustration is by no means exhausted by saying that Christ governs his people, or that there is a community of feeling and interest between them. The main idea is that there is a community of life; that the same Spirit dwells in him and in them. As the body is every where animated by one soul, which makes it one and communicates a common life to all its parts; so the Holy Ghost, who dwells in Christ, is by him communicated to all his people, and makes them in a peculiar sense, one with him and one among themselves, and imparts to all, that

life which has its seat and source in him. As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body; so also is Christ, for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.* Another illustration, but of the same import, is employed by Christ, when he says, I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abided in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. As the branches are so united to the vine as to partake of its life and to be absolutely dependent upon it, so believers are so united to Christ as to partake of his life and to be absolutely dependent on him. The Holy Spirit communicated by him to them, is, in them, the principle of life and fruitfulness.

Christ and his people are one. He is the foundation, they are the building. He is the vine, they are the branches. He is the head, they are the body. Because he lives, they shall live also; for it is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them. The Holy Spirit, concerning which he said to his disciples, He dwelleth with you and shall be in you, is to them not only the source of spiritual life but of all its manifestations. They are baptized

* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

by the Spirit;* they are born of the Spirit;† they are called spiritual, because the Spirit of God dwells in them;‡ whereas, the unregenerate are called natural, or sensual, "not having the Spirit."§ Believers are sanctified by the Spirit;‖ they are led by the Spirit;¶ they live in the Spirit;** they are strengthened by the Spirit;†† they are filled with the Spirit.‡‡ By the Spirit they mortify sin;§§ through the Spirit, they wait for the hope of righteousness;‖‖ they have access to God by the Spirit;¶¶ they pray and sing, in the Spirit.*** The Spirit is to them a source of knowledge,††† of joy,‡‡‡ of love, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.§§§ This doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is so wrought into the texture of the Gospel as to be absolutely essential to it. It ceases to be the Gospel if we abstract from it the great truth, that the Spirit of God, as the purchase and gift of Christ, is ever present with his people, guiding their inward exercises and outward conduct, and bringing them at last, without spot or blemish, to the purity and blessedness of heaven.

* Luke iii. 16.
§ Jude. 10.
** Gal. v. 25.
§§ Rom. viii. 13.
*** 1 Cor. xiv. 15.
† John iii. 5.
‖ 1 Cor. vi. 11.
†† Eph. iii. 16.
‖‖ Gal. v. 5.
††† Eph. i. 17.
§§§ Gal. v. 22.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16.
¶ Rom. viii. 14
‡‡ Eph. v. 18.
¶¶ Eph. ii. 18.
‡‡‡ 1 Thess. i. 5

The secret of holy living lies in this doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ. This is not only the ground of his hope of pardon, but the source of the strength whereby he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness. It is by being rooted and grounded in Christ that he is strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and is enabled to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth and heigth of the mystery of redemption and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge and is filled with all the fulness of God. It is this doctrine which sustains him under all his trials, and enables him to triumph over all his enemies, for it is not he that lives, but Christ that lives in him, giving him grace sufficient for his day, and purifying him unto himself, as one of his peculiar people zealous of good works.

As union with Christ is the source of spiritual life, the means by which that life is to be maintained and promoted are all related to this doctrine and derive from it all their efficacy. Thus we are said to be purified by faith,* to be sanctified by faith,† to live by faith,‡ to be saved by faith.§ Faith has this important agency because it is the bond of our union with Christ. It not only gives us the right

* Acts xv. 9. † Acts xxvi. 18
‡ Gal. ii. 20. § Eph. ii. 8.

to plead his merits for our justification, but it makes us partakers of his Holy Spirit. Christ has promised that all who come to him shall receive the water of life, by which the apostle tells us is meant the Holy Spirit. It is by faith, and in the persuasion of our consequent union with Christ, that we have confidence to draw near to God and to open our souls to the sanctifying influence of his love. It is by faith that we receive of his fulness and grace for grace. It is by faith that we look to him for strength to overcome temptations and to discharge our duties. It is by faith that we receive those exceeding great and precious promises, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature.

All Christians know from experience that faith in Christ is the source of their holiness and peace. When beset with temptations to despondency or sin, if they look to him for support, they are conscious of a strength to resist, or to endure, which no effort of will and no influence of motives ever could impart. When they draw near to God as the members of Christ, they have freedom of access and experience a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. When pressed down by afflictions if they remember that they are one with him who suffered for them, leaving them an example, they rejoice in their tribulations, knowing that if they suffer they shall also reign with him.

Moreover, as in virtue of union with Christ we receive the Holy Spirit as the source of spiritual life, to maintain that life we must avoid every thing which may provoke the Spirit to withdraw from us. The Bible teaches us that the Spirit may be grieved; that his influences may be quenched; that God, in judgment, often withdraws them from those who thus offend. Evil thoughts, unholy tempers, acts of transgression are to be avoided not merely as sins, but as offences against the Holy Spirit. We must remember that to defile the soul with sin, or the body by intemperance or impurity, is sacrilege, because we are the members of Christ and our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, right thoughts, just purposes, holy desires are to be cherished, not only as right in themselves, but as proceeding from that heavenly agent on whom we are dependent for sanctification.

This is a very different thing from opposing sin and cultivating right feelings on mere moral considerations, and in dependence on our own strength. This may be what the world calls morality, but it is not what the Bible calls religion. Such considerations ought to have and ever will have, with the Christian, their due weight; but they are not his dependence in his efforts to become holy, nor is his reliance upon his own resources. The life which he leads is by faith in Jesus Christ: and it is by

constant reference to the Holy Spirit, and dependence on him that that life is maintained. For it is as inconsistent with the religion of the Gospel, to suppose that we can make ourselves holy by our own strength, as that we can be justified by our own works.

It is principally through the efficacy of prayer that we receive the communications of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is not a mere instinct of a dependent nature, seeking help from the author of its being; nor is it to be viewed simply as a natural expression of faith and desire, or as a mode of communion with the Father of our spirits; but it is also to be regarded as the appointed means of obtaining the Holy Ghost. If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Hence we are urged to be constant and importunate in prayer, praying especially for those communications of divine influence by which the life of God in the soul is maintained and promoted.

The doctrine that the Holy Spirit works in the people of God both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, is not inconsistent with the diligent use of all rational and scriptural means, on our part, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God For though the mode of the Spirit's influ-

ence is inscrutable, it is still the influence of a rational being on a rational subject. It is described as an enlightening, teaching, persuading process all which terms suppose a rational subject rationally affected. The indwelling of the Spirit, therefore, in the people of God, does not supersede their own agency. He acts by leading them to act. Thus we are commanded to do, and in fact must do, what he is said to do for us. We believe, though faith is of the operation of God; we repent, though repentance is the gift of Christ; we love, though love, gentleness, goodness and all other graces are the fruits of the Spirit. The work of sanctification is carried on by our being thus led under this divine influence to exercise right dispositions and feelings For the law of our nature, which connects an increase of strength with the repeated exercise of any of our powers, is not suspended with regard to the holy disposition of the renewed soul. Philosophers say that the vibrations imparted to the atmosphere by the utterance of a word never cease. However this may be, it is certain every pious emotion strengthens the principle of piety, and leaves the soul permanently better. The good derived from that influence, or from those services which call our love, faith, or gratitude into exercise, is not transient as the exercises themselves. Far from it. One hour's communion with God pro-

duces an impression never to be effaced; it renders the soul for ever less susceptible of evil and more susceptible of good. And as the Holy Spirit is ever exciting the soul to the exercise of holiness, and bringing it into communion with God, he thus renders it more and more holy, and better fitted for the unchanging and perfect holiness of heaven.

It is principally by the contemplation of the truth, the worship of God, and the discharge of duty that these holy exercises are called into being All thought and affection suppose an object on which they terminate, and which, when presented, tends to call them forth. We cannot fear God unless his holiness and power be present to the mind; we cannot love him except in view of his excellence and goodness; we cannot believe, except in contemplation of his word, nor hope, unless in view of his promises. As these affections suppose their appropriate objects, so these objects tend to excite the affections. Were it not for our depravity, they never could be brought into view without the corresponding affection rising to meet them. And notwithstanding our depravity, their tendency, resulting from their inherent nature, remains, and as that depravity is corrected or removed by the Holy Spirit, these objects exert on the soul their appropriate influence. We are

therefore, said to be sanctified by the truth; * to be made clean through the word of Christ; † to be born again by the word of truth; ‡ to be changed into the image of God by beholding his glory.§

It is most unreasonable to expect to be conformed to the image of God, unless the truth concerning God be made to operate often and continuously upon the mind. How can a heart that is filled with the thoughts and cares of the world, and especially one which is often moved to evil by the thoughts or sight of sin, expect that the affections which answer to the holiness, goodness or greatness of God should gather strength within it? How can the love of Christ increase in the bosoms of those who hardly ever think of him or of his work? This cannot be without a change in the very nature of things, and, therefore, we cannot make progress in holiness unless we devote much time to the reading, and hearing, and meditating upon the word of God, which is the truth whereby we are sanctified. The more this truth is brought before the mind; the more we commune with it, entering into its import, applying it to our own case, appropriating its principles, appreciating its motives, rejoicing in its promises, trembling at its threatenings, rising by its influence

* John xvii. 19
† John xv. 3.
‡ James i. 18.
§ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

from what is seen and temporal to what is unseen and eternal; the more may we expect to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so as to approve and love whatever is holy, just and good. Men distinguished for their piety have ever been men of meditation as well as men of prayer; men accustomed to withdraw the mind from the influence of the world with its thousand joys and sorrows, and to bring it under the influence of the doctrines, precepts and promises of the word of God.

Besides the contemplation of the truth, the worship of God is an important means of growing in grace. It not only includes the exercise and expression of all pious feelings, which are necessarily strengthened by the exercise, but it is the appointed means of holding communion with God and receiving the communications of his grace. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall walk and not be weary, they shall run and not faint. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they shall be still praising thee. They shall go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. This is a matter of experience as well as revelation. The people of God have ever found in the private, social and public worship of the Father of their spirits, the chief means of re

newing their spiritual strength. The sanctuary is the temple of God on earth whose services are preparatory to those of the temple not made with hands eternal in the heavens. It is here too that the sacraments, as means of grace, have their appropriate place. They are to us what the sacrifices and rites of the old dispensation were to the Israelites. They exhibit and seal the truth and promises of God, and convey to those who worthily receive them the blessings which they represent. The Christian, therefore, who is desirous of increasing in the knowledge and love of God, will be a faithful attendant on all the appointed forms and occasions of divine worship. He will be much in his closet, he will be punctual in the sanctuary and at the table of the Lord. He will seek opportunities of fellowship with God, as a friend seeks intercourse with his friend; and the more he can enjoy of this communion, the better will he be prepared for that perfect fellowship with the Father of lights which constitutes the blessedness of heaven.

Finally, to be good, we must do good. It has been falsely said that action is the whole of oratory, and as falsely supposed that action is the whole of religion. There is no eloquence in action except as it is expressive of thought and feeling, and there is no religion in outward acts except as they are informed and guided by a pious spirit. It is only by

maintaining such a spirit that external works can have any significance or value. It is perhaps one of the evil tendencies of our age, to push religion out of doors; to allow her no home but the street or public assembly; to withhold from her all food except the excitement of loud professions and external manifestations. This is to destroy her power. It is to cut her off from the source of her strength, and to transform the meek and holy visiter from heaven, into the noisy and bustling inhabitant of the earth. It is so much easier to be religious outwardly than inwardly; to be active in church duties, than to keep the heart with all diligence, that we are in danger of preferring the form of religion to its power. The same love of excitement and desire to be busy which make men active in worldly pursuits may, without changing their character, make them active in religious exercises. But if there is danger on this side, there is quite as much on the other. Although religior does not consist in outward acts, it always produces them. Whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* The love of God can no more fail to produce obedience to his commands, than a mother's love can

* 1 John iii. 17.

fail to produce watchfulness and care for her infant. That man's religion, therefore, is vain which expends itself in exercises that relate exclusively to his own salvation. And doubtless many Christians go halting all their days, because they confine their attention too much to themselves. It is only by the harmonious exercise of all the graces, of faith and love towards God, and of justice and benevolence towards men, that the health of the soul can be maintained or promoted. It is not merely because the exercise of benevolence strengthens the principle of benevolence that doing good tends to make men better, but God has ordained that he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He distils his grace on those who labour for the temporal and spiritual benefit of their fellow men, and who follow the example of the blessed Redeemer, walking with God while they go about doing good.

True religion as we find it described in the Bible is then neither an external show, nor a fitful ebullition of feeling. It is a permanent, spontaneous and progressive principle of spiritual life, influencing the whole man and producing all the fruits of righteousness. It is not any one good disposition, but the root and spring of all right feelings and actions, manifesting itself in love and obedience towards God, in justice and benevolence towards man, and

in the proper government of ourselves. This divine life can neither be obtained nor continued by any mere efforts of reason or conscience, or by any superstitious observances, but flows from our union with Christ, who causes his Holy Spirit to dwell in all his members. In order to promote this divine life it is our business to avoid every thing which has a tendency to grieve the Spirit of all grace, and to do every thing by which his sacred influence on the heart may be cherished. It is by this influence that we are sanctified, for it leads us to exercise all holy dispositions in the contemplation of the truth, in the worship of God and in the discharge of all our relative duties.

This unpretending volume, designed for the use of educated youth, was written with the view of impressing on its readers those great truths of revelation which are immediately connected with practical religion. We have designed to convince them that all skepticism as to the divine authority of the Scriptures is inexcusable, inasmuch as the Bible brings with it its own credentials. It makes such a revelation of the character of God, of the rule of duty and of the plan of salvation as challenges immediate assent and submission to their truth and goodness. It sets forth the Redeemer as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners, in whom the glory of God is so revealed that those who refuse to

recognise him as their God and Saviour refuse, to infinite excellence, their confidence and obedience. In order that every mouth may be stopped, the Bible, thus replete with evidence of its divine origin, is confirmed by all kinds of adequate proofs from miracles, prophecy and history, that it is, indeed, the word of God.

The divine authority of the Scriptures being established, the great question to be decided by every one by whom they are known, is, What do they teach as to the plan of salvation and the rule of duty? It has been our design to aid the reader in answering this question for himself; to show him that the Bible teaches that we are all sinners, and that, being sinners, we have lost the favour of God and are unable to effect our own redemption. When we feel that this is true with regard to ourselves, we are convinced of sin, and are irresistibly led to ask what we must do to be saved. In answer to this question the Scriptures set forth Jesus Christ as born of a woman, made under the law, satisfying its demands, dying the just for the unjust, rising again from the dead, and ascending up on high, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. They teach us that it is not for any thing done or experienced by us, but solely for what Christ has done for us, that we are justified in the sight of God; and that in order to our being saved

through Christ, we must accept him as our Saviour, not going about to establish our own righteousness, but submitting to the righteousness of God. Those who thus believe, do, at the same time repent; that is, they turn from sin unto God, through Jesus Christ. They are now his followers, and declare themselves to be such by confessing him before the world and by devoutly attending upon those ordinances which he has appointed to be means of acknowledging our allegiance to him, and of communicating his grace to us. The Scriptures further teach that our work is but begun when we have thus renounced the world and joined ourselves unto the Lord. The spiritual life commenced in regeneration is carried on by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in all the people of God, by teaching them to look to Jesus Christ, as their living head, for all those supplies of grace and all that protection which their circumstances require. They are thus washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, and being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, they will be at last admitted into God's blissful presence and enjoy the full communications of his grace and love for ever and ever.

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